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RANDOLPH GORDON

AND

OTHER STORIES.

BY

"OUIDA,"

AUTHOR OF

"CECIL CASTLEMAINE'S GAGE," "IDALIA," "GRANVILLE
DE VIGNE," "STRATHMORE," CHANDOS," ETC., ETC..

Second Series.



PHILADELPHIA:
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1874.

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RANDOLPH GORDON.

PART THE FIRST.

I.

OUR CORPS, AND WHO COMPOSED IT.

I AM sorry to record it, our county is a very big fellow on the map, and it is very celebrated for corn, cattle, and cheese, as the geography says, whose kindly alliteration helped me to escape the dire wrath of that odious governess of my sister's who first made study hateful to me when I was a little chap in the nursery; our county is picturesque, fruitful, and aristocratic, but it is a weathercock, as twirling and whirling and changing a girouette as the very fierce cock who sits on the top of our village church, looking as tremendous as the Gallic cock looks in alarmists' letters, but in reality is only innocently ready for squalls, as perhaps the Gallic cock is too, desperately as we vilify him.

Our county is a weathercock, and changes its manners as a beauty her dresses, careful only of one thing—to be in the fashion. When Uncle Tom was the popular idol, we talked of nothing but niggers; in '54, we were solely Crimean, and ladies, working away at Chersonnese comforters, almost wished the war were in England, that

they might have "those darlings" near them, ignorant of the fact that when the darlings were bayoneted, and they pinned against the wall till they told where their jewelry was hidden, the proximity would not have been altogether so pleasurable. In '58, we were pétris with Indian mutiny, and would not hear of any massacre that was not most frightfully and impossibly horrible, or of any vengeance less than the instant impaling of every separate Hindoo; and now, of course, we, who talked the most beautiful Odes to Peace that can be imagined when the Great Exhibition was up, and would have turned our swords into ploughshares if any agriculturists had taken a fancy to use such implements, have veered round the other way, and have fallen down before butts, Long Enfields, and cock's-tails, in the worship common just now to all England. We were a little bitten with Garibaldism, and, should the promised February campaign come on, nothing will go down but a man who has fired a shot in the Calabrian battle; but at present we are inoculated with volunteering as strongly as small boys with passion for smoking, or city dandies with that abominable patchouli, a whiff of which would have killed poor Brummel, who counselled us, "No perfumes, only country-washed linen."

When the Toadyshire Militia was all in its glory, the county thought nothing ever would equal them; but militia are gone down now—so very far down as to be clean out of sight and out of mind, and nothing is heard of but the Volunteer Rifles. Sweetly bray the bran-new bugles down road and street, through town and country; swiftly through the turnpikes dash scores of those pepper-salt coats, whose wearing saves their gallant owners from all twopenny taxations; pop go our rifles all the livelong day, with a crack of doom which, we believe,

must shake the Tuileries to its foundations; the cock-tails we require must have shorn every barn-door monarch in the kingdom; ladies give up their thirteenth new bonnet to subscribe for our silver bugles; and the stiffest of governors, who would not let us out with a latch-key to save our lives, believes, without a murmur, that we have been at the butt till midnight. We can cover any short-comings we like with the patriotic click of our blessed rifles; our mothers and wives fully accredit us when we tell them we have spent the evening in practising, though, if we made any other excuse, they would pounce straightway with feminine shrewdness on suspicion of that "abominable little fright at the cigar-shop," or that "detestable man Captain Birdseye, who teaches you such bad habits;" en un mot, our county in toto is gone mad about rifles, and its capital, Bosheumbury, in particular, turns out to a gamin, and shouts, as Duke Constantine when he saw the Guards, "*Ces hommes marchent comme des dieux!*" when they behold us, tramping in our small boys' bugle calls, self-confident as Alexander, patriotic as Hermanicus, our cock-tails waving grandly as the Roman eagles, each rifle as omnipotent as William Tell's bow; and we—the West Goosestep Volunteers—if we never do anything else more martial, at least have carried our county by storm. We are in very large numbers; we swarm, in fact; we are tall and short; we are fat and lean; we are of all statures, from that of Daniel Lambert to that of Jefferey Hudson, which is somewhat detrimental to the comparison to the gods, mentioned above; but, n'inporte, we are Volunteers, and our uniform does what charity is stated, but never discovered to do—cover a multitude of sins, and what is much more detrimental to a man in feminine eyes than the biggest sin he can commit, personal defects; and to be

cased in it passes over a man's short-comings in Toadyshire, as to be rolled up in a black sermon-case or printed by a religious publisher passes over bad English and false reasoning, which would be pulled up mercilessly if found in an "exceptional novel," whatever that new style of romance may be in these raffiné days, when Henry Fielding, I presume, would have had the circulating libraries' doors shut upon him lest he should demoralize the morals of his readers, who must all be under age, I suppose, if they cannot be trusted to choose their literature for themselves.

Our corps presents every possible variety of that genus homo concerning whose parentage Mr. Huxley answered the Bishop of Oxford so wittily the other day. There is my cousin, Randolph Gordon, of Eton Chase, who had been captain and lieutenant-colonel in the Guards, till knocking down another man for killing a pet dog of his with a savage kick, led to a duel, which led, in turn, to his selling out *nolens volens*, and who, having one of the finest places in the county, was applied to, to head the "movement;" there is Freddy Audley, twenty-two, five feet three, pretty as a girl, and as afraid of wetting his feet as his maiden Aunt Clementina's pet Tom; there is Lacquers, of Grassmere, who, having a dragon of a wife, and a secret and unholy passion for cards, returns daily thanks for the volunteer movement, that enables him to have such snug loo parties *sub rosa* at the Angel in Snobbleton, and to go home looking innocent and professedly fagged to death with his patriotic efforts to hit the bull's-eye; there is old Turbot, the town clerk, who suffers frightfully in struggling into his uniform and in frantic efforts to buckle his belt, but who sleeps with his Enfield under his pillow, in constant apprehension of burglarious approaches from Louis Napoleon; there is little Jemmy

Fitzpop, who went to-day to Boulogne, firmly impressed that the sight of his harness, which he persists in sporting on all possible and impossible occasions, will produce such an effect on French nerves as will make them quiet by force of terror, as his used to be at whisper of "Bogey;" there is Bassompierre Delafield, the pet physician of Snobbleton, who shares the town-worship with the popular preacher of St. Faithandgrace, who, being of a nervous, not to say timorous character, suffers silent agonies when he hears the rear rank man capping at full-cock, and feels in vivid imaginings a little accidental jar discharging all the contents of the barrel sans cérémonie into his spinal cord; there is little Beak, the coroner, who, not content with holding inquests on the accidental deaths that fill his purse, does his very best to cause them when aspiring to be martial, and, forgetting his gun's not a quill, carries his rifle in such a gracefully *laissez aller* manner, that it went off the other day in a totally unexpected freak, and singing playfully on its path, grazed a knife-grinder's donkey, carried a bunch of wheat-ears off a lady's bonnet, bowled between Piper, the mayor's, little fat legs, causing him next door to apoplexy, and finally lodged itself in a perambulator, whose nurse fled, with a shrill shriek, into the murderous Beak's paralysed arms, leaving her unharmed charge in infantine calm, the only individual present that wasn't in hysterics or a syncope; there is Simmons, the cashier at the bank, who, from the first hour he was at drill, when he pricked Doddington, the county-court judge's son, with the point of his bayonet, causing grave Dodd to jump in a most unpremeditated and un-Spartan manner, has never gone through the manœuvres right as yet, and never will, it is my firm belief, till he marches shoulder to shoulder with Ulysses in the Elysian Fields; there is

your humble serviteur myself, Cosmo Lyle, who am in it because the governor is Colonel-commandant, a county member, and a very opinionated individual, riding, as his present hobby, that England can only be saved by the crack of Long Enfields, as at the Great Exhibition he held it was to be saved by peace at any price, at the Spithead review by Jack Tar, and at the era of the Alma by "the Queen's" (who, when they're wanted, are called "our gallant troops," but, when they've done the service, get grumbled at as a "standing army;") and there are, besides us, innumerable lawyers and bankers and gentry of all degrees; clerks, who are dreaming of platoon firing while drawing up settlements; drapers, who catch themselves bringing their measure well up to shoulder, to the imminent peril of affrighted customers' eyes; grocers, whose martial eyes flash at the mere sight of the delicious word "Gunpowder" on their tea-papers; hair-dressers, who lacerate their subjects in the most terrible manner in their having to fling down their razor for their rifle—gentry, in fact, who made Boscumbury and all Toadyshire the *fac simile* of Edinburgh when the "Antiquary" saw it, bitten with martial hydrophobia, and found his solicitor's quill turned to a sabre, and his physician learning to kill instead of cure, and all the world gone volunteer-crazy, as he tells us in his racy Scotch. And the women are gone as mad about us; not for our beauty, for our jackets, like Mr. Tupman's brigand jacket at Mrs. Leo Hunter's fete; our sleeves, so symmetrically fall at the top and meagre at the bottom, our little hats, with those wonderful before-mentioned panaches de coiffure waving therefrom, like the little funny forelock with which poor old Time is always decorated, are not embellishing; at least, not to my fancy, though little Fitzpop, and a good many others I could mention, will think

it treason for me to say so, deeming, I believe, that it is the perfection of neatness, elegance, and military style, and that the Belvedere Apollo himself would look even more superb if we could deck his marble limbs in volunteer uniform. N'importe, the women have lost their pretty little, glossy, empty heads after us, and cherished pets, the parsons, are at a discount—so much at a discount, that one daring young curate, driven to desperation at the contempt his black surplice met with from his quasi-worshippers, joined us, seeing no reason why he shouldn't fight, like William of Ely, and got lectured, en consequence, in humiliating style, by his diocesan, who forbade him all combat, save that peculiar privilege of parsons and spinsters, the war of words. Our file-firing has taken all the shine out of pulpit philippics, and the assembly and the roll-call drown the bell for early matins, to which the fair daughters of the Church used to swarm in flocks to the sanctuary of their best-looking and biggest-whiskered high-priests. They are all at a discount; nothing goes down but the Toadyshire Rifles, and even little Fitzpop, that infinitesimal morsel, that smallest of small boys, who could be put under his own cock-plumed tile, as Robin used to put his wife under the extinguisher, brags of his being a “a good soldier,” (!) and gets petted by the ladies who six months ago gave him sugar-plums, because he is a “defender of his country,” and carries a rifle that is longer than himself.

There is but one heterodox sceptic and scoffer in Toadyshire; she will persist in making fun—most cruel fun—of us. “Learn to shoot, most noble seigneurs, it's the very best thing you can do, but, for Heaven's sake, don't call yourselves soldiers! Soldiers, indeed! a lot of lawyers, and bankers, and merchants, and brewers, and grocers, and tailors, who just pop away at a butt, out of bus-

iness hours!" cries that most méchante and provoking of all pretty women, with a toss of her chestnut-haired, gold-netted head, who takes a malicious delight in scoffing at the Goosestep Volunteers, at all the great things we plan, and all the small things we do, just because she is the idol before whom the majority of our corps do most love to bow and tumble down in abject humiliation. This abominable little unbeliever is Miss Fanny's (Fred Audley's you know) sister. He has three of them; what their nom de baptême may be, I hardly believe I know to this day; everybody that ever I heard calls them Sunshine, Pearl, and Rosebud—poetic nicknames given them in the nursery from their respective exteriors, and clinging to them, as nicknames generally do, ever since. Freddy and his sisters dwell with their maiden aunt, Miss Clementina Audley, who, though possessing Audley Court, and much property in those weather-glasses of political affairs, the funds, is Miss Clementina still, so rigid a martinet that we *did* think of her for commandant of our corps, and so pétrie with conventionalities, that she is generally supposed to be the author of those mysterious works on etiquette, whose manufacture must emanate from such a very rare and peculiar stamp of genius, that it is a pity we refuse so obstinately to follow their rules. Freddy is her heir, and she pets him much as she pets her black Tom, which she elegantly christens Koh-i-noor, but which the girls send her straight into hysterics by calling Saturnus and the Diable à Quatre. Her nieces are her bêtes noires. Freddy is quiet, lady-like, and, for his silky hair, his aversion to cold, his affection for soft cushions, and laziness, exactly like his co-pet the black Tom. But the girls? "They are dreadful," Miss Clementina informs her bosom friend, Mrs. Tomtit, the vicarress; "they are never still, they

are never quiet; they ride as become only rough-riders; they play battledore and shuttlecock in the picture-gallery, till the horrible pat, pat, pat, of these odious things are enough to drive anybody distracted," she assures her, "to say nothing of the waste of time; they do nothing that's useful; they can't work; if Sunshine did try to make a cobweb pocket-handkerchief, she took a needle the size of a hedge-stake; they can only make one's head ache almost to vertigo, with singing, and playing; they talk and laugh so ridiculously, all through breakfast and dinner, that they hardly know whether they are eating grouse or broad beans, mock turtle or skilligalee; and their conduct with gentlemen—she believes it passes now under that odious new word, flirtation, but——" And Miss Clementina throws up her eyes and hands, and thinks of the modest and maidenly times of *her* girlhood, when D'Orville bowed over Evelina's hand when she had promised to be his wife, and knelt down, respectfully, to touch that main blanche with his moustaches, when he had rescued her from a yawning tomb. What a pity it was all that modesty and maidenliness were unappreciated by the sex who could have rewarded them, and that where these demoralized young ladies had twenty soupireurs, Miss Clementina had not had one!

At Audley Court our corps was worshipped. Freddy was in them (Frederick Augustus she termed him;) that was enough for Miss Clementina, who having, moreover, horrible visions of ruthless and savage Zouaves, who would break one night in on her slumbers, and behold her in all the sublimities of her toilette de nuit (a sight, I have been told, quite sufficient in itself to frighten any amount of Zouaves back again across the channel), was filled with solemn gratitude towards us "British legions,"

as she grandly termed us, and poured fearful and terrible abuse upon heterodox Sunshine, when she declared she would "rather have one troop of the Queen's to take care of *her* than all the battalions of bourgeois they could muster." Sunshine, you will perceive, was, as I say, the only scoffer in Audley Court and in Toadyshire. Pearl and Rosebud admired, nay, adored us; in fact, gazed on our evolutions at battalion drill, skirmishing, forming squares, file firing, and all the rest of it, with worshipping eyes, and had started a subscription for a silver bugle for us. They had not been long at Audley Court, when the "movement" began which has heaved England up into so many mounds called butts, and elevated her into so many flat portions called practising-grounds, as if the amount of powder required in the country had produced a general violent earthquake. The first time I saw them was, when we were first formed, just budding, just beginning to enrol ourselves, and admire ourselves, and swell ourselves into, what we are just now, the gallant 1st West Goosestep Volunteer Rifles, when my cousin, Randolph Gordon, Freddy Audley, and I, were riding home from drill at Snobbleton, and were passed at full gallop by three ponies, with young ladies on their backs, who laughed as they flashed past us.

"Take care, Freddy, it is going to rain, and Aunt Tina will be so anxious about you!"

"Hallo! who are those acquaintances of yours?" said Gordon, whose eye-glass was up in a second, our gallant captain being as keen after pretty women as a terrier after rats.

"My sisters," said Fred, rather sulkily; "they are such chaffy girls, they make game of everything."

"And you in particular, I suppose? Well, you *are* rather tempting, Fanny, By George! how well they

ride; that front one in especial—wouldn't she go straight over a bullfinch!"

"That's Sunshine," said Freddy, still gloomily; "she's a regular little devil."

"Vraiment! that's attractive," said Randolph. "Women are so given to swearing they're angels, and the newspapers to repeating it, now-a-days, when they take up the strict morality line, because it pays cent. per cent. and induces 'the clergy' to subscribe, that to hear of anybody who's a little demoniacal is a positive treat. She hasn't a cloven foot, though, I hope, because I *do* like a small brodequin; but what in the world do you call her?"

"Sunshine," yawned Fred. "Deuce take that rifle, how my shoulder aches! That ain't her name, of course, but everybody calls her so; the house would be as dull as death without her, though she does teaze one horribly. She makes no end of game of the volunteers."

"No great difficulty to do that, my dear fellow," laughed Randolph. "If I illustrated for *Punch*, I'd engage to draw some scenes from the life, the antithesis of the martial, and the perfection of the ludicrous: Little Fitzpop, who's only fit to shoot sparrows with a popgun, but who thinks himself individually a match for a whole regiment of Chasseurs Indiennes; my worthy Sergeant Stitcher, who uncurls his legs and sets down his goose to come and play at soldiers for an hour, when he's sent home Mr. A.'s coat and Mr. B.'s trousers; those young fellows from the Bank, who jump off their stools to rush at their uniforms as vehemently as they used to rush at the inkstands to indite sonnets to Miss Mary's eyelash, or Miss Emma's flounces. Oh, you are all wonderfully good fun; and if I don't laugh when I form you into line for inspection next month, I shall

deserve as much credit as an alderman who doesn't tumble when he backs before her Majesty."

"Confound you!" said I, "you, too, make fun of everything. Why the deuce did you join us, then?"

"Because I was solicited, my dear Lyle, and a man as amiable as I am always does what he's asked. Besides, sans doute, it's a very good movement; all movements are that tend to make a nation strong, self-reliant, and able to take care of itself; all those countries are greatest where the use of arms forms a part of every individual's education. En même temps, why you should all trouble yourselves to buy cock-tailed hats—I assure you there's no particular military virtue in them—why you should persist in going about in uniform, at every unseemly hour, when we, the lawful owners of uniform, cast it, and get out of harness and into mufti as soon as ever we can; why you make such fools of yourselves by going over to France, and exhibiting your bran-new livery, to frighten Napoleon's four hundred thousand men, and brag of what you would do in such very outrageous bad taste, I can't imagine; and while you will persist in such bêtises, I must make game of you. I'll get acquainted with Miss—what is her name?—Sunshine; we can have some chaff together. Come in and dine with me; it is going to rain, as the young ladies said, and the Goosestep Volunteers haven't had their regulation goloshes yet—have they, Audley? Come in; I can promise you some good claret and some first-rate Latakia."

We did go in, and had a very jolly evening over Randolph's venison and olives. His place, Eton Chase, having as many agréments and as good an establishment as the epicurean heart of man could desire, though he did not often abide there to enjoy them, having certain faithless, restless tastes for wandering, and an attachment to

excitement and pleasure which would have made him supremely wretched to be tied down in Toadyshire, even though one of the lords and kings of that very stuck-up, but, I must confess, not very brilliant county.

II.

HOW SUNSHINE, PEARL, AND ROSEBUD SHOT AT BULL'S-EYES AND
HIT OTHER MARKS.

RANDOLPH and I made a point of calling at Audley Court, a courtesy we had always confined before to leaving cards, when we were quite sure Miss Clementina was out, a tête-à-tête with that awful lady being a point much too far for the politeness of either of us to stretch. Freddy had always been at the Court, but his sisters had lived in Ireland with their mother's sister, till she, going with her husband to Jamaica, had thrown them on the tender mercies of Miss Clementina, their mother having died when they were all little, and their father having been shot out at the Cape some few years afterwards.

"If we can find anything to give us a little fun in Toadyshire, tant mieux!" said Randolph; and when we got well acquainted they did give us a good deal of fun. Miss Clementina used to look very black—black as night—black as her pet Tom—whenever Gordon or I were shown into her drawing-room. "It is my opinion," she averred to Mrs. Tomtit, "that they are two of the worst men in England. Colonel Gordon never bore a good character, and he has the most impertinent manner of staring at Sunshine, and leaning over her chair and talking to her just as if she were his own property, like that

nasty chattering parrot of his. And as for Mr. Lyle, he is no better, with his flowers, and compliments, and trumpery to Pearl. [However, if girls will cheapen themselves to men, we can hardly blame men for taking advantage of it.] (I kept gentlemen in their proper places, but the young women of the present day know nothing of that self-respect which compels the respect of the opposite sex.) And Miss Clementina shut the steel clasp of her district bag with a resentful snap, perhaps at the recollection that she had made the opposite sex a trifle too respectful—so much so, that they had never proffered anything at all warmer. Randolph and I were no favorites with Miss Clementina: she required for her beau-ideal some such spotless *collet-monté* individual as the virtuous tanners and pure-minded coal merchants of the present day novels, who can never drink anything stronger than milk-and-water, and who are as hideously unattractive as they are impossibly virtuous. Randolph's life and mine were calculated to alarm her more than séance a nervous lady. We smoked, we talked slang, we read French novels, we flirted with every woman who came near us worth the attention. We were over thirty, but we hadn't taken any "mission," nor headed any "philanthropical movement;" in fact, there was no end to our sins. We were her antipodes and pet bêtes noires after her nieces, and Miss Clementina looked black at us accordingly. "The Audley girls" became the idols, the stars, the queens of our corps. Sunshine, the eldest, with her riant smile, her radiant eyes, and her gay spirits, her moquant laugh, more fascinating than strictly pretty; Pearl, dark, stately, beautiful as you could wish a woman, but a little severe, with that pure Grecian profile of hers; Rosebud, a lovely pink and white, lazy, lovable little thing, just seventeen—they all

had their separate troops of worshippers; and when Randolph was playing pool in the Boshcumbury Subscription Rooms, or lurching at the pretty pastry-cook's over the way, he would laugh till he cried when the Audley pony trap stood at a shop door, to see the frantic haste with which little Fitzpop would dash down a neighboring street in that brilliant uniform, in which popular report had it that he slept; and young Simmons dash open the door of his governor's bank, where he was cruelly immured till the tower clock struck four; and Lacquers fly into the same shop for something for his sister, for whom he was never known to purchase presents at any subsequent or previous period of his life; and Doddington flee from Stubble's the tobacconist's, as if he wouldn't be seen talking to Fanny Stubble for a million, leaving his Manillas on the counter, and poor Fanny inconsolable behind it; and all the others in view gather and cluster and hover round that little Shetland trap till the small quadrupeds were quite hidden in the moving sea of pepper-and-salt coats and green cock-tails swaying round them. Randolph laughed; but he would as often as not lose his three lives in double quick time, or leave his lobster salad half finished, and lounge up the street with his glass in his eye, as if he, too, had come there from accident, till he came to the Shetlands, where he would stand, leaning against the dash-board, and talking witty nonsense with Miss Sunshine, their conductress, while Fitzpop, and Simmons, and Lacquers, and Dodd, and all the rest of them, fell back respectfully, but swore with very small reverence at their Captain in their own minds, or I am much mistaken in the nature of man in general, and our corps in particular.

"You seem to like that girl's devilry," said I to him one day, when Randolph and I rode to an archery fete,

where those trois sœurs, separately voted by their separate worshippers the "most charming things in the county," were expected to be in due Toxophilite glory.

Randolph stroked his moustaches, and smiled the same sort of smile with which a man regards a stag with nine points, or thirty-six brace in a morning, or any other pleasant game.

"Yes, I like her devilry, as you term it; it's very innocuous mischief, and has a sweet temper to soften it. She can do a thousand *méchancetés* I'd defy another girl to attempt; yet she's a thorough-bred lady through it all. Yes, I like Sunshine; it's such fun to hear her talk. And you seem to like that dark-eyed sister of hers—eh, old boy? Well, she's a very handsome girl, I grant you, but she's too stately for me; besides, I don't care for your brunes; tall women haven't, generally, much fun in them."

"Pearl's plenty of fun in her, I assure you," said I; "only it's her hobby—at eighteen!—to talk of woman's rights, and woman's intellect, and such-like themes of dignity and grandiloquence."

"Ah!" laughed Randolph, "'Pearl's Martineau's bristles,' as Sunshine calls them. I bet you, if it came to the trial, that my little devil, as you politely term her, with all her satire and her quick wits, would be easier to coax, and gentler to judge one, than your Pearl, though seemingly she's milder and quieter. If ever any of our naughty stories come to light, Lyle, and those young ladies are on the jury, you'll see we shall get most mercy from the one whose tongue seems the keenest, as it is, I grant you, the sharpest."

"I bet you five pounds Pearl would be merciful to my peccadilloes!"

"I bet you five pounds she wouldn't be so kind to yours, as her sister would be to mine."

"Done!"

"Done! There they are, both of them. I must go and teaze her a little, it is such fun to see her when her blood's up."

With which Gordon made his way to Sunshine, who shot utterly wide of the target in her hurry to turn and talk to him, and I made mine to her sister, who stood leaning on her bow, looking like a young Polycrita, or Queen Carcus, in her plus beaux jours.

"So you are going to have a silver bugle given you, Colonel Gordon?" said Sunshine, welcoming her ally and friend.

"Yes; and you won't present it; it is very cruel of you."

"Not I!" laughed Sunshine, with a toss of her head. "I leave it for Aunt Clementina. I am no patroness of gentlemen who boast of having learnt in a year what a drill sergeant teaches Hodge or Ambrose in a quarter; and rush with such a true amateur ardor to their Enfields that the dog killed, and the windows smashed, and the old ladies frightened into apoplexy, must distract the magistrates and swell the bills of mortality most fearfully. Pray do you pay for all the damages done by your corps? because, if you do, Mr. Fitzpop shot my King Charles one day in his martial ardor, and I shall come upon you for another."

"You shall have the best dog in England if I can find him. But you should have made a sacrifice and given us the bugle, as I made a sacrifice and took command of the corps. After the Coldstreams these gentlemen in Melton seem painfully slow, and the way in which they rush about in cross belts and shakos, haversack and uniform, is most curious. The idea of showing in harness whenever one can get out of it! But amateurs always *querdo*. So does England when she takes a fit of enthu-

siasm. It doesn't sit well on her ; she's a calm, strong nation, who can make her voice heard in Europe without any boasting, and is grandest when she is quietest, like her own lion couchant. But now and then she goes mad about some hobby—once or twice in a century—and then she dins it into everybody's ears till they are so heartily sick of it that it looks ludicrous, however good it may be in the main ; the kitten's freaks sit very clumsily on the old lion. Vivacity, vehemence, red-hot élan and adventure are French characteristics, but, when England imitates them, she is sure to make a blunder ; it isn't her style, and her hobbies perish in the vehement hug she gives them. Men certainly can't do better than learn the use of their rifle, and however hypothetical invasion may be, it is no use locking the door after the horse is stolen ; but we can't do it quietly. We must go and rave about it, and brag of it, and call all Europe to look at it, till, bothering them to admire the glory of our *pro tempo* sun, we force the spots on it on their notice. Why the deuce civilians can't practise at butts without people's comparing them to a regular army with whom they can't possibly form any parallel yet, at the least, and believing in some speeches from soldiers, who, as the *Athenæum* lately said, 'invite a cheer by lavishing praises which pass with an unmilitary people, does puzzle me, I confess. But we are a singular nation, you know ; we scribbled nothing but peace-at-any-price poems in '51, and in '60 we think of nothing but cartridges and percussion-caps, ties and butts, wars, and rumors of wars. Look ! your sister has hit the centre. She has hit something else, or I am mistaken : I never saw Lyle so dévoué.'

"Who is that very pretty woman who is now taking aim ?" asked Sunshine.

Randolph looked, and swore a little mentally, for causes best known to himself.

“That? Mrs. Rocksilver.”

“You look rather irritated at her presence,” laughed Sunshine. “Do you know her?”

“Oh, yes; slightly.”

“And who is she? A name tells me nothing.”

“Unless it is as expressive as Sunshine,” said Randolph. “Well, she is—Mrs. Rocksilver. She married poor Rock when he was only twenty-three, and has flirted, à outrance, ever since. Of course, before a week of the honeymoon was out, they were bored to death. I never heard of anybody yet who wasn’t. Any two human love-birds, caged up together, will fret their very feathers off in ennui, and hate each other like fighting-cocks, before a month is out.”

“If they do,” said Sunshine, with that rapid anger which it was Gordon’s inhuman delight to arouse, “you may depend on it that it is because the softness of the love-bird has only been put on for some purpose of convenience, and that the hate of the game-cock has always been au fond.”

“Oh no,” answered Randolph, “that doesn’t follow; a man may worship a woman, but if he isn’t désillusionné in a month, she must be of something more than mortal mould——”

“Yet he will swear to pass a lifetime with her!” interrupted Sunshine, too indignant to let him finish. “Good Heavens! if two people are to be weary of one another in a month, how dare they undertake to spend a whole existence together? No wonder marriages are unhappy if such is their creed. How will they smooth each other’s trials, bear with each other’s faults, learn to feel for each other’s errors, if they love no better than that? And if poverty

overtake them, and they are thrown on their own society for resources, what affection will they have to solace each other and support their ruin?"

"Affection! you don't look for that in the world, do you?" laughed Randolph, true to his laudable intention to tease her. "We don't form love unions now-a-days; we only make 'good matches.'"

"No; and that is why Sir Cresswell's is fuller than it can hold," said Sunshine, with dire contempt for his prosaic views. "What people term 'good matches' too often bring bad fruit. From a wife who accepts him for position, what man can expect fidelity?"

"Most visionary of sunbeams, no man expects it!" said Randolph, caressing his moustaches to hide a smile of more gratification than he cared his companion to see; "and he has no right, for women will never *give* it. If ever I marry, three days will be the limit of my constancy, and I doubt if I shan't be tired of my wife before that. Three days alone with one woman is an ordeal to try the devotion of any man!"

"Then, Heaven grant that no man with views like yours may ever marry a woman that loves him, or he will break her heart."

"Hearts don't break. I don't know whether they used to be Sèvres, to make the poet's expression correct, but they're all stone-china now, and won't even crack, I assure you; but you dwell in the clouds—sunbeams always do—so that the earth, when it is just warm enough for its sensible inhabitants, strikes them as most chillily cold."

"Especially," said the young lady, half laughingly, half petulantly, "When they fall upon hard iron icicles like you, that are so incrustured with society's hoar-frost that nothing will dissolve them."

"Except Sunshine," said Randolph, with a smile, and a glance from his beautiful velvet eyes, as ladies called them, astonishingly warm for an icicle! He an icicle! By Jove, Miss Sunshine should have had a glimpse into his past!

"You here, Randolph? Why, you wrote me word last time you were going yachting to the Levant. It is wonderful to see you in your own country. Are you thinking that il faut vous ranger at last?"

Randolph swore again under his moustaches, and glanced impatiently at Sunshine. He lifted his hat to Mrs. Rocksilver, and took her proffered Jouvins as she floated up to him—a pretty, affected, bold-eyed, dashing-looking woman, of eight-and-twenty or thirty.

"I thought you said you only knew her slightly?" said Sunshine, with a lift of her contemptuous pencilled eyebrows, as Mrs. Rocksilver passed on with old Lord Saltire, at whose house she was staying, giving Gordon a very familiar nod, smile and *au revoir*.

"Did I? Well, what of that?"

"Why, that your slight acquaintances seem very intimate ones. You write to her, and she calls you Randolph," said Miss Sunshine, quickly, who, having had his exclusive attention for the last two months, could have slain any other human being who got a word from him.

"Oh! that's nothing. In some sets one soon becomes familiar, and one has to write to lots of people one doesn't care a button about. Her mail-phaeton horses were not broken well enough for her to drive, and I offered to break them for her, and had to write about them. Won't you come and have an ice? We can't talk pleasantly with all these people about us."

Tête-à-tête over *glace à la vanille*, he did talk, very pleasantly, too; but Sunshine was disquieted, like a

brood of partridges at sight of a pointer's nose among the turnips. She would have liked to call him Randolph herself, and allow nobody to do so besides. That story of the phaeton horses didn't quite satisfy her, and she hated Mrs. Rocksilver instantly and vehemently, being a young lady of very hot and rapid impulses, accustomed to treasure Randolph's notes of acceptance of the Audley Court invitation as if they had been deeds of gift to all the money in Barclay's.

PART THE SECOND.

III.

HOW A SILVER BUGLE SOUNDED DIFFERENT NOTES, AND RANDOLPH LOST A PONY-RACE.

MISS CLEMENTINA, the richest woman in Toadyshire, had bought in common with other feminine county magnates, a silver bugle for her beloved "British Legions;" it being the custom now-a-days to reward those defenders of their nation who pop away at butts with a portion of Potosi ore, as righteous godmothers give young Christians a drinking-mug on the occasion of their being entered into the kingdom of Heaven, and zealous congregations present pious pastors with costly soup-tureens to hold their mock-turtle, as a reward for the elaborate periods with which he has taught them to turn away their eyes from beholding vanity, and to reject all the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, giving all their goods unto the poor. If Miss Clementina had been poor, the whole of East Toadyshire would have shouted with laughter at the idea of a middle-aged lady filling so prom-

inent a place, to the exclusion of all the pretty women with which the county was glutted ; but Miss Clementina being Miss Audley, of Audley Court, paying the heaviest income-tax in the shire, all the volunteers were bound to be excessively flattered by the condescension, and everybody thought her the most proper person that could possibly have been selected, except certain of the disaffected amongst us, who swore at the old lady's office tomfoolery, as we politely termed it, in not delegating the office to one of her charming nieces.

“ Confound it ! ” said Randolph, savagely ; “ what folly it all is ! And here am I, who hate humbug worse than any man going, forced to take a share in it. It is enough to make one sick only to think of all the bosh that old lady will talk about her ‘ noble defenders,’ and *I* shall have to listen to it all, and—reply to it ! ” With which, Sunshine's quondam Guardsman struck a fusee wrathfully, and lamented, with extreme pathos, his own weakness and amiability in consenting to accept the honor of commanding the East Goosestep. The East Goosestep, however, notwithstanding his and his ally Sunshine's scorn, considered themselves more killing than those very dazzling gentlemen the St. Georges or the Six Footers, and quite able, by the mere sight of their serried ranks, to carry terror into the bosoms of every French, Austrian, and Russian soldier in Europe, if Europe could but have looked on when we marched up the wide elm avenues of Audley Court, where the inspection by Lord Saltire, the Lord-Lieutenant and Custos Rotulorum of the county, and the presentation of the silver bugle were to take place. How glorious we were ! though little Fitzpop did fall flat on his face, owing to the extreme torture of some very new boots he had donned for the occasion, and Mr. Turbot, the town-clerk,

did puff and blow under the burden of his epicure's tons of adipose tissue, and the anguish of that horrible belt, which would never come to without the united strength of his wife and his footman at either end; and young Simmons did get out of step in a manner calculated to drive himself and everybody distracted, and try to get right with such frantic efforts that he made himself black in the face, and had to partake of brandy from some humane pocket-pistol,—barring these and other small detrimental accidents, we were very grand, very grand indeed—at least we thought ourselves so, and that is the primary thing after all; if a woman thinks herself the belle of a ball-room, it will be very difficult to persuade her that others don't consider her so too. Most of the spectators, however, concurred in our self-adoration; for we were their pet hobby, and love made them blind to all faults in us or our manœuvres.

“How splendid they look!” said Pearl, gazing upon us like a young Semiramis on her battalions, as we passed her at double-quick. “Don't they walk as if they said ‘We are gentlemen, not common soldiers?’”

“Well, dear, as the individuals at the present moment closest to my eyes are that diminutive shoemaker of Snobbleton who sent home my kid boots this morning, and Mr. Turbot, who has about as unmilitary an aspect as an alderman after a corporation dinner, I can't see the force of your remark as much as I could wish,” returned méchante Sunshine, “and a ‘common soldier’ is no inglorious appellative. I haven't forgotten the Crimea, though everybody else has.”

I don't suppose she had, with Randolph there in front of her, with his C. B. cordon and his medals on that grizzled Melton that had replaced his Coldstream scarlet!

We went through position, and battalion, and skir-

mishing; we performed manual and platoon exercise; we formed into line, and we formed into square; we fired in file, and we fired in volleys; and we marched in open column and in quarter distance column; and we did everything contained in those volunteer manuals, which have been to us of late what her breviary is to a good Catholic; and, what with the clash of the ramrods, and the tramp of the marching, and the smell of the powder, and the sight of the cartridge-strewn turf, all Toadyshire was stricken with the deepest admiration of us, and perfectly persuaded that neither Cæsar's legions, nor Attila's hordes, nor Scipio's conquerors, were ever fit to hold a candle to us, which flattering sentiment our Lord-Lieutenant conveyed to us in a speech sweet as milk-punch and fragrant as attar of roses, calculated to fill us with the most delicious self-adoration, and to secure our votes to a man for his son in the coming county election.

Lord Saltire having concluded with much applause, as reporters say, Miss Clementina advanced, stately, solemn, severe, as Miss Clementina ever was, amidst as much cheering as Three per Cents. ever obtained for a lady, and made us, I think I may say, one of the most sublime perorations that ever issued from female lips since the Virgin Queen harangued the troops at Tilbury Fort. Hersillia, Hortensia, Aldrude, Bertinora, Isabel of Arundel, Marthar Glar, all *their* eloquence was nothing to it, and I grieve that, instead of being handed down to posterity, Miss Clementina's oration will only live to line portmanteaus and butter-tubs, in company with the *Toadyshire Post* and the *Boshcumbury Herald*. She called us "the saviours of England;" she spoke of the homes and hearths we were banded together to protect; she enlarged on the defenceless sex, for whose safety we were armed. Altogether she was so touching

that all Toadyshire was strung up to the most rapturous pitch of enthusiasm, and many ladies present were moved even to tears. Mrs. Turbot wept plenteously at the thought of that dear twelve-stone lord of hers going out to stick invaders, dinnerless and grogless; Fitzpop's mother nearly went into hysterics at the vision of her dear boy, with gory wounds, defending that "hearth" where it was her delight to behold him every evening warming his slippers and going into muffins; and even flinty-hearted Sunshine was fain to hide her face in her cambric handkerchief, and give one little sob, but I am half afraid it was of a cachinnatory character, for, catching Randolph's ear, it sent him straight into agonies of suppressed laughter, which his pet ruse of stroking his moustaches could not hide so entirely but Miss Clementina saw it, paused one second, continued with extra solemnity, and presented him his silver bugle, with a mental vow that the captain of the East Goosestep Rifles should never blacken the doors of Audley Court again, by her invitation at least. That smile was never forgiven him; it was blacker in Miss Clementina's eyes than the blackest of Randolph's sins—which were d'une latitude énorme!

I question if Knowsley, lavish as it was, was better in its way than the Audley Court luncheon with which Miss Clementina regaled her beloved British Legions to a man—I ought to say to a boy, for our smallest bugler, aged ten, eat as much as a parish overseer would consider maintenance for six whole families for a month, in the tent prepared for their regalement—while we, the officers of the gallant Goosestep, walked into Strasbourg pâtés and Moët's best in the great old hall of Audley Court, where Miss Clementina, boiling with rage at Randolph's unpardonable sin, which was not assuaged by

the three times three we gave her, presided with solemn majesty, with Lord Saltire on her right, and my governor on her left—Pallas herself was never more imposing. I had Pearl all to myself, a proximity, I believe, I managed to make as agreeable to the young lady as it was to me; and Randolph was so *dévoué* to Sunshine, that Mrs. Rocksilver's handsome eyes scintillated with annoyance as she sat opposite to him, and gave him now and then a peculiar smile, which made him restless, and think to himself what a confounded fool he had been the previous season when the Rocksilver box, boudoir, and barouche had seen more of him than was wise, and a certain Buhl writing-case in the Rocksilver Davenport had been the receptacle for notes signed Randolph Gordon, which would have been much better left unwritten, especially now that a pair of softer eyes had chased the Rocksilver's sparkling black ones out of his mind.

"Do you like her?" asked Sunshine, noticing an anxious glance which Randolph gave across the table.

"Her—whom?" asked he, the quick and exceedingly unwelcome question upsetting that sang froid which Randolph was accustomed to boast a man going into a fit of apoplexy at his side, intelligence that the house was on fire, the receipt of a challenge, an order for active service, and a summons for breach, all at the same moment, would be powerless to disturb.

"Your friend Mrs. Rocksilver," said Sunshine, with that impatience with which a woman always speaks of a rival, real or imaginary.

"Like her? Oh no! She can be very agreeable, but she is a frivolous, heartless woman of the world—nothing in her—nothing that I should admire *now*, at the least," said Randolph, with an assurance by his eyes that Sunshine had spoilt him for every other breathing woman.

“Merci, mon ami.” The whisper was very low, but both Randolph and his new favorite heard it, and there was a smile soft and amused, it is true, which said to him as plainly as smiles can speak, “I will pay you for that, monsieur!” on the Rocksilver’s handsome passé face.

“Hark! your aunt is off upon spiritualism,” began Randolph, à propos de bottes, to draw Sunshine’s attention from the very malin glance of the Rocksilver’s beautifully tinted eyes. “What a dear woman it is to take up fashionable follies, and I’m always tilting up against them. This very morning you made me laugh in the most mal-à-propos and ill-bred manner in the very midst of her most pathetic peroration! She’s a firm believer in Mr. Howitt and Mr. Home, isn’t she? I was looking at Mackay’s *Popular Delusions* the other day, and thought we could scarcely laugh much longer, with any show of justice at the least, at the witch Mamia, the mesmerism *furore*, or the philosopher’s stone, now that people of education, intelligence, and accredited position can be found who will lend their drawing-rooms and give their credence to the legerdemain and vulgarities of clever charlatanism. The generation of a century hence will certainly be puzzled whether to vote us wilful fools or helpless idiots. It seems very curious to me that (with the power these mediums claim to possess of constant contact and intimate liaison with the spirit world, who in their turn know everything that has taken and will take place in the world they have quitted), instead of going about in such very *infrà dig.* style, earning their few guineas a night at a séance, they don’t make their fortunes by some noteworthy prophecy that would do some credit to their powers of vaticination: tell us the fate of Gueta or Venice, or what the state of the funds will be a week beforehand, or how long Louis Napoleon

will keep as his motto 'L'empire c'est la paix,' or something worth hearing. Ah! there is Miss Audley rising. Shall I ever make my peace with her, I wonder?"

Sunshine didn't answer him with her usual readiness and zest. She was pondering over Mrs. Rocksilver, a problem she could not solve to her liking; and she was probably wishing with all her heart that she had a medium for her friend, who would tell her the meaning of the sort of by-play that went on between the Captain-commandant of the Toadyshire Rifles and Lord Saltire's dashing and dangerous guest.

"So you are entêté with one of the Audley girls, I hear, Randolph," said that lady, with a laugh and a sneer, as, after the luncheon was over, we broke into groups to go and see the shooting-match for a beautifully-mounted rifle and a silver cup Lord Saltire and my governor had offered for the best shot in Toadyshire. "Yeu were not made for â marrying man, mon cher; the Benedict rôle won't suit you, though you *are* thirty-four. I doubt if you ever keep the same thought through twelve hours. Miss Audley is very charming, sans doute, still I have half a mind to do a good deed and save you from your doom."

"What do you mean?" said Randolph, with a carelessness that did him infinite credit as an actor.

"N'importe!" laughed Mrs. Rocksilver, gaily, with a glitter in her eyes. "I was only thinking of some letters I have, which might postpone your sacrifice; but if sacrifice is to your taste, I don't see why I should interfere to rescue you from it."

Randolph stroked his moustaches with an impatient frown on his brow.

"You can exhibit your correspondence where you please, of course; but whether it will be more to your credit than mine——"

"Fear makes you discourteous, mon ami," cried Mrs. Rocksilver, with another light, pleasant laugh, her sweet temper in no wise disturbed. "Don't be afraid, you are not such a great prize that I shall dispute you. Ah! Major Thornton, how do you do? I have not seen you before. Are you come to have a shot for Lord Saltire's rifle?"

Whether she had any particular design to make Randolph fail to win the prize or not, I can't say, but her words and her smiles rankled sufficiently in his mind to make him so careless of his laurels as *the* shot of Toadyshire, that he who could hit anything—a willow wand at three hundred yards, if he had liked—when he and I were tied for the first prize, scoring fifteen points each, missed, and let me make a centre without dispute.

"Why don't you win it? You *can*," said Sunshine, impatiently, as he rejoined her. "Aunt Clementina looks so pleased, and so does that Mrs. Rocksilver."

When one lady applies the pronoun *that* to another, it invariably means a great amount of dislike, jealousy, and general contemptuous irritation. "That Julia Vernon!" say your sisters of that girl without tin, whom you like and they dread, wishing to hook you for their rich friend, Miss Fitzingots. "That Miss Flirtington!" says your wife, of your pretty cousin, whom you ventured to take to the Crystal Palace one day.

"*That* Mrs. Rocksilver!" she is jealous already," thought Randolph, skilled in all feminine weaknesses, as he asked her very tenderly, "Do you wish me to win?"

"Of course I do," said Sunshine more impatiently still. "You were meant to do something better than fire at electric targets for silver cups, but since you are doing it, do well in it. No man should ever do less than his best; if every one remembered that we should have greater

men than we have; patriots would not sink into place-men, eloquence into clap-trap, genius into money-fetching trash. Why the first myrtle-wreaths are the brightest, is because a man puts out all his strength when he enters the arena, and thinks any blows will suffice to keep the belt when he has once been declared champion. Go and win; never let these civilians say they beat a man who fought on the Sand-Bag battery."

Randolph smiled; he liked his "little devil" best in her hot, impatient, contemptuous anger. He whispered something that nobody heard but Sunshine, and took care to carry off the governor's cup with eighteen points at a distance of five hundred yards, throwing to despair every one of our corps, who, from fat old Turbot to little sprat of a Fitzpop, had each seen in their several imaginations that portion of Hunt and Roskell's plate standing on their sideboards to be handed down to admiring generations in memoriam of the gallant Toadyshire Rifles, and was rewarded for his exertions with so radiant a smile from his Sunshine, that he wondered—as a man always does wonder when he changes his loves—what beauty he could possibly ever have seen in the bold, roving, tinted eyes of Augusta Rocksilver, as they had flashed on him in the grand tier, the Ring, and artistically darkened and very embellishing boudoir in Curzon Street, the season before, when that lady had marked him out as the most agreeable man about town, from the day she first saw him driving his tilbury by the Serpentine.

"What's the matter with you, Randolph?" said I, when we were waiting for Lacquers and some others of the county men to go and play loo at the Angel, in Boshcumbury, where we had dined after the Audley Court affair.

"Matter with me? Nothing particular. But devil

take her! What did she come here for?" said Randolph, with an angry stab at his cigar, that wouldn't burn.

"Who are you anathematising?"

"Who? Augusta—Mrs. Rocksilver, of course. I was a fool last season, you know, Cosmo. I thought her a very handsome woman—and so she is—but I told her so a good deal too much, and I was idiot enough to give her my picture, and write to her, and do all sorts of compromising things that are always in black and white against one, as if I'd been four-and-twenty instead of four-and-thirty; and now here she turns up in Toadyshire just when——"

"You're making the same love to another woman. Very inconvenient, I admit."

"Not the *same* love, thank you! The liking for the one is very different to the liking for the other," muttered Randolph, with his weed between his teeth. "I never *liked* the woman—there's nothing in her to like—she's all artificial; but she was deucedly handsome, and I made love to her. Tant pis! And now she'll go showing those letters and things to Sunshine. I'm certain she will; confound it!"

With which colloquy to himself, not to me, Randolph flung his refractory Cuba into the grate, as if it had been that luckless Rocksilver notecase which contained those dangerous letters with which his last love held him in check with his new one.

"And can't you trust to her forgiveness?"

He smiled. "Well, perhaps. She's very plucky; but your most plucky are often the gentlest to coax, and women always like a dash of the *mauvais sujet*, even when it militates against themselves; they prefer a man's mind to be a sealed envelope, about which there is a little mystery and a good deal of pride in getting it to

unclose, to a blotless breviary that lies open before them ; a Rousseau's Confessions that they mustn't look into, to an open letter that those who run may read. How handy it would be if one could score out some of the days of one's life. If a man would set up in business to sell Lethe like porter by the pot, he'd very soon make his fortune—wouldn't he ? However, if one does foolish things, I suppose one must expect to pay for them—eh ? There come the men." And Randolph took up a fresh cigar, and struck a fusee, humming to himself Béranger's—

" Fi des coquettes maniérées !
Fi des bégueules de grand ton !"

appropriating the refrain, I presume, to his quondam admiration and present detestation, Augusta Rocksilver, née Fixatrice ; while I congratulated myself that the Rocksilvers of *my* past were not on the scene, but thought, if ever they did turn up, that I should soon persuade Pearl, with her languid eyes, and her calmness, and her very deep, though, perhaps not very demonstrative, attachment to me, of which I had made myself sure that day under the tête-à-tête favoring orange-trees of the Audley Court conservatories, to listen to reason and forgive me ; while with that vivacious, satirical, and very vehement Sunshine, I doubted if Randolph would not find it up-hill work to obtain his absolution if ever he asked her for it.

Our butt is about a mile out of Boshcumbury, the practising ground rejoicing in the non-military appellation of the Sheep Fields, from the fact that, when Boshcumbury possessed an abbey, of which the ruins rejoice the souls of the archæologists to this day, the old monks pastured their flocks, where now, as Randolph remarks,

we are teaching our lambs to be lions, or, at least, our asses to don a leonine skin and semblance, and, like Bottom, "roar that it will do any man's heart good to hear, and fright the ladies till they shriek." The butt is a mile out of the town: and a sorry mile that is to all our corps when the practising days are wet ones, and their cock-tails are bedraggled, their Melton soaked through, and water dripping off every point of their beloved harness. Such a day was it after the Audley Court inspection: and if Randolph had given us the option of deferring the drill, I venture to say, martial though we were, we shouldn't have scorned the permission as pluckily as the Guards did the other day, when they were up to their knees in water at Aldershot. But he offered no such thing—that winter before Sebastopol had made him horribly contemptuous of all effeminacies, and cruelly impervious to all babies' whinings," as he brutally termed our most severe but mildly-silent sufferings. We went through the drill that pouring summer evening. Poor Turbot, who had got out of a comfortable after-dinner doze, snatched the handkerchief from his brow that kept the flies away while he slumbered, gazed wildly at the clock, and struggled frantically into harness, his wife pulling at that miserable belt till the poor little woman's face was scarlet, and the good town clerk decidedly apoplectic, in his haste to be in time. It was a picture of the most touching misery to see that bon bourgeois, who had never stirred out without his goloshes, his umbrella, and his waterproof, dripping like a Newfoundland after a bath—himself puffing, blowing, saturated—a portrait of distress to touch the most flinty heart; and many an oath did he swear to himself for having exchanged his quill for an Enfield—the shelter of his snug office for the windy pampas of the Sheep Fields. Bassompierre-Dela-

field, the pet physician, who had bought a rifle and a ten pound diploma almost en même temps, and divided the worship of the fair women of the borough with the popular preacher at St. Faithandgrace, getting the more votes of the two because he was still unmarried, thought wildly of bronchitis, diphtheria phthisis, and every pulmonary evil under the sun, as the rain ran off his little shako into his neck in countless and chilling streamlets, and wished the volunteer movement at the devil, and his own fondly-cherished person safe in the drawing-room of one of his lady patients. Horrible as the bank and its imprisonment had once seemed to poor Simpson, the vision of that hated stool and desk seemed paradise, for they at least were *dry*, which not a thread of that beloved uniform of his could purport to be this dreary, pouring, remorseless, practising day ; poor little Freddy Audley, shivering and wretched as his idolised curls hung dank and dripping, shrank under the great plash of each rain-drop as if it were the thug of a French cannon ball ; even Lacquers, that jolliest of men (when away from his wife,) looked as blue and dull as if he were having one of my lady's diurnal lectures ; and through it all our heartless captain kept us hard at it as if it were a sunshiny noon, swore to himself what a fool a soldier was to have anything to do with a set of civilians, and looked as cool and unconcerned with the water dripping off his long moustaches as if he were an otter, or a boatman, or a seal, or a bathing-woman, or any other amphibious being to whom the element came as second nature.

“Go home and have a warm bath, Freddy,” said he, with the most unfeeling laugh imaginable, as the poor little dripping heir of Audley Court wrapped the plaid round his knees as he started his dog-cart off from the Angel yard. “Mind you have some white wine whey,

and ask Miss Clementina for her chaufferette ; and a few drops of nitre, I've heard, are the very best thing for catarrh ; but your aunt will see to all that. What a blessing a maiden aunt is to young volunteers, who'd like to play at soldiers only in fine weather ! I wonder what you'd have done, my boy, if you'd been with us the night before Alma ? Cambridge himself had only a tilted cart, and, by George ! how it poured all night ; splash, splash, into the puddle where we lay, sans cloaks, sans tents, sans anything. You'd have shone there, Freddy, and Miss Clementina's whey would really have been most acceptable, though on my life, I don't think you'd have been alive to drink it, since you suffer so frightfully from a little rain."

"A little rain ! Cats and dogs ! You're as bad as Sunshine," murmured Freddy, between a growl and a lisp.

The last name silenced Randolph, or at least sent him into a reverie, so that poor Freddy was allowed to start his mare off in peace from further assaults ; and the captain of the East Goosestep threw himself across his grey, shook his bridle, and clattered down the High street, the young demoiselles at the pastry cook's looking longingly at him through the dripping plate-glass of their shrine, as they solaced shoals of moist volunteers with steaming mock turtle and cherry brandy, or piping hot oyster patties. Turbot went home to an extra tumbler of whiskey-and-water, warm slippers, and every creature comfort that his little wife could heap upon her patriotic and self-sacrificing lord. Bassompierre-Delafield changed and went to dine with a pet patient, who had his favorite entremets for him, and who listened to his recital of the horrors of the day with as thrilling an admiration as Europe now listens to the sufferings of Poerio, Arrivabene, or

Teleki. Young Simmons and little Fitzpop turned into the Angel to warm themselves with mulligatawney, bemoaning bitterly that their dear jackets were so utterly soaked through, that they should be obliged to go in mufti to the Fitzvalseurs' carpet-dance. Lacquers went home to a stately dinner and an admirably dressed and coiffée Zantippe, who would have been more cheering and refreshing if she had a little less handsome a toilette and a little more pleasant good humor. Freddy drove me off with him to Audley Court, where he had asked me to dine, I gladly accepting, hours with Pearl being the summum bonum of earthly felicity with me ; and Randolph galloped on his own way back to Grassmere, thinking of the Rocksilver, of Sunshine, with some other entanglements of his past and plans for his future, as he rode his grey at a pace fit for Croxton Park or the Grand Military.

As he passed along by the side of that small stream dignified in Toadyshire by the name of river, which bordered the Audley estate, he heard the ring of a pony's hoofs, and a merry laugh that he knew well enough.

"Ah, bonjour! Will you ride a race after the rain?"

Quick as the wind, Sunshine rode past him, lifting her gay, bright face to his, all the brighter for gleaming out of the dark afternoon mist.

"My little Arab shall beat your Grey Darrell. Fifty to one I reach the milestone first!"

"Done! For the best Jouvins!" laughed Randolph, though he felt a much greater desire to snatch her up from her little Arab, and carry her off to Grassmere, as the Gordons of old had summarily wooed and won the ladye loves whom fate and foe kept from them. Away they went, and the little half-bred Arab set off at such speed when his rider struck his silky black flanks with her rid-

ing-whip, as promised to beat Randolph by a length, though he *was* counted one of the best riders that had ever graced the Queen's or cleared bullfinches with the Pythley and the Tedworth. Probably he did not try to work up his grey to do her best ; probably, he preferred losing the Jouvins, and giving her the pleasure of victory ; at any rate, the little Arab dashed along the turfy road at a pace worthy of his ancestry, both English and Syrian, that would really have drawn him down admiration if he could have been entered for the Goodwood or the Ascot Cup, and Sunshine won the distance by a couple of yards, clapping her gauntlets with joyous laughter.

"I won! I won! I told you I should! Who can defy me?"

The bright blue eyes lifted to him chased the Rock-silver's black ones straight out of Randolph's mind.

"Not I," said he passionately, as he reined up Grey Darrell close by the Arab's side. "Sunshine, some people will tell you that my love is no great prize, but such as it is it is yours, as long as my life will last, stronger and deeper than I ever felt it for any other woman before. Whatever faults I may have had to others I will have none for you, for God knows how dear you are to me!"

This form of address would have had far too little Grandisonian reverence in it to suit Miss Clementina, who would doubtless have expected Randolph to kneel on the ground, without any respect to the muddy state of the roads, and tender in submissive language his respectful homage and undying devotion. But Sunshine seemed to be very well satisfied with it in its modern, brief, and unreverential form. As Randolph bent down from his saddle, and his moustache touched those mischievous lips which spoke such cruel satire on his volunteer rifle corps,

Miss Clementina, on the other side of the river, going to visit her district, after the rain, with a gigantic umbrella, goloshes in which you could have put Sunshine's whole body, and her own pet page, bearing a packet of stiff tracts, looked stricken dumb with righteous indignation, trembling till every bone in the umbrella skin rattled.

"In a public road!" she murmured, almost paralysed with horror. "What next? How utterly lost to all self respect, to all maidenly feeling, to all proper reserve! *He* shall never enter *my* house again!"

Past them, too, in the usually deserted highway rolled, just at the juncture, a carriage with the Saltire arms on the panels and hammer-cloth, and Mrs. Rocksilver looked through the window at Grey Darrell and the little Arab, and set her fine white teeth together.

"Faites votre jeu, monsieur ; but it will be odd if you win!"

PART THE THIRD.

IV.

HOW RANDOLPH AND I SINNED AND CONFESSED IT, AND HOW
WE GOT PARDON AND PENANCE.

MARKET ROTTENBOROUGH, twin capital of Bosheumbury, sent the East Goosestep an invitation to drill with the West Toadyshire. Their strength was about fifty; ours amounted to eighty; fifty and eighty volunteers—one hundred and thirty in all! Was not that a force enough to sneer at any imperial whatsoever, and bestow

upon the county blessed with such a phalanx as sweet a sense of security as a maiden lady experiences when she "bolts the door," before retiring to rest, with a miniature bar of iron that a burglarious file would cut through in a second? Market Rottenborough was to give us an ovation. We were to drill at Bottlesmere, a village two miles off, where Sir Cheque Ingotts, the banker of Rottenborough, had bought a seat, and set up as a country gentleman. We were to dine in the town-hall, and the Toadyshire Railway Company had offered to take us in second-class carriages for third-class fare to show their sense of our patriotism—a munificence which Randolph did not feel as he ought to have done, but, on the contrary, gave a most ungrateful sneer to it.

Market Rottenborough went quite as mad about us as ever the Yankees about the Prince of Wales. They dressed up the town with evergreens and flowers, they had out the election flags, which hung together in unity for the first time since their manufacture, and the charity school banners, whose inscriptions were not particularly appropriate, as they inculcated giving the other cheek if one was buffeted, and similar injunctions of an anti-gunpowder character, and the shops were shut, and the bells fired, and the old militia band performed that familiar fantasia peculiar to itself, with the bugle at a gallop, the clarionet at a trot, and the fife at a slow march, till we could not possibly have been more fêted if we had taken Paris, invested Petersburg, or stormed Peking.

As we marched under the triumphal arch into the park, and wheeled into line to give the general salute, we saw Miss Clementina with Sunshine, Pearl, and Rosebud. The lady of Andley Court made her eyes into stone, and gave Randolph a glance as fixed and chilling as that of the Medusa, as she bestowed on him her shortest and

stiffest bow. We had no time for a tête-à-tête, for, after we had been reviewed and complimented, we had to march back to Rottenborough, and go through the horrible ordeal of a public dinner, where Randolph and I, being not gifted with patience, and having visions of Sunshine and Pearl at a ball, whither we were going at Bottlesmere as soon as we were released, chafed unspeakably during the laudatory orations which passed between the Rottenboroughites and Bosheumburyonians.

Randolph and I were profoundly thankful when we could shake ourselves free of it, and go off to the ball at Sir Cheque's where Miss Clementina had immolated herself to impose some check by her presence on her nieces, and who looked black as thunder as Randolph, recklessly regardless of the Rocksilver, took possession of Sunshine in a cool, right-of-way manner, authorised, of course, by her improper conduct under the elms the day before. The independent conduct of her nieces irritated Miss Clementina. Rosebud alone was acting properly, and seriously, encouraging the Hon. Augustus Priedieu, third son of Lord Saltire; but Pearl, whom she had always considered the only manageable one of the three, cut her to the heart, in engaging herself to such a mauvais sujet as Cosmo Lyle; and Sunshine, "she should never be surprised at anything dreadful that happened to that girl," she assured Mrs. Tomtit, as, tired of chaperoning, they sat talking over the parish, the county, the company and her nieces, in a deserted whist-room.

"She is wild, headstrong, wayward; and this handsome reprobate, Colonel Gordon—— Hark! who is that, talking in the ante-chamber?" said Miss Clementina, interrupting herself.

"Randolph, do you remember that miniature of yours;

the one Mayall took?" said somebody invisible in the inner apartment.

"Mine!—a miniature? Really I have had so many taken, that I can't remember. None of them were like me," said a man's voice, that Miss Clementina knew but too well.

"I don't agree with you, mon cher; mine is an admirable likeness of you; so good indeed, that I think Miss Audley would like to have it, if you really *are* engaged to her. You've been engaged to so many, it's almost a cry of 'Wolf!' I will send it her, if you like?"

There was a suppressed "The devil!" and a more audible "Thank you; I don't doubt she would be much obliged to you, but I have a picture by me I have already promised her."

"Vraiment! which old love did it belong to last, Randolph—Lady Aurora, or Georgie, or Madame de Tintiniac, or La Roville, or whom?"

"To none of them. I shall not insult my future wife by offering her others' leavings."

This was very haughty and laconic: it was answered by another laugh.

"Then don't offer her your heart, mon ami! However, you are right, Benedict, to play propriety, and I have no wish to be behind you, so I will certainly send Miss Audley that miniature, and all your letters too. Your future wife is the most proper keeper of them; don't you think so?"

"For God's sake, Augusta——"

"Augusta! For shame, Colonel Gordon, you insult your 'future wife' and—me too."

"Great Heavens! that for a few months of folly——" began her interlocutor, passionately. Then he went on, keeping his anger down: "You can do as you please:

Miss Audley loves me too well to revenge anything of my past upon me. The only result of your sending her my letters will be to show that Mrs. Rocksilver cares enough for Randolph Gordon to be jealous of his forgetting her in a truer, fonder, stronger love for another."

Miss Clementina rose, grasped Mrs. Tomtit's arm, and dragged her from the room; then she looked at her with a face pale with anger, and feelings outraged, till every link in her bracelets, and every tip of her marabouts, trembled and quivered, while her voice was sepulchral enough to have drawn crowded houses to Sadler's Wells or the Grecian.

"I am always lighting on something horrible—and to think my niece might have married that wretch! Oh, Annette! can we ever be too prudent and too circum-spect with his dreadful sex?"

Miss Clementina quite shook with her awful secret as she stepped into the carriage. She shivered as her dress touched Randolph, and she could have shrieked when she saw him hand Sunshine in, and saw his moustache touch her hair and cheek, under pretext of giving her her bouquet, as he bade her good night, and held her hand in his.

"Sunshine, do you dream of ever marrying that Colonel Gordon?" asked Miss Clementina, as her fat bays puffed along the dark road, in a tone so frightfully funereal that Sunshine started, then colored, smiled, and intimated that she had dreamt of it, and had, moreover, been recently assured that her dream should come true. "Then never think of such a thing again; it would be the greatest calamity that could befall you; he is the worst, the vilest of his sex!" resumed her aunt, with such solemn and startling emphasis, that Sunshine dropped her fan and her bouquet in amazement. To slander her beau ideal

thus, she thought Miss Clementina must be fit habitant or Hanwell. No language was ever heard so thrilling and so severe as that in which Miss Clementina told the story of that fatal conversation overheard between Randolph and Mrs. Rocksilver; she didn't pause till a violent jolt in a rut stopped her peroration, and compelled her, weak in bronchia though strong in vehemence, to halt for breath.

"You won't see him again, will you, Sunshine?" said Rosebud, strong in the devotion and spotlessness of the Hon. and Rev. Augustus.

"After such an insult, you will call up all your pride to punish him as he merits—the same love he gives to you offered to Mrs. Rocksilver!—abominable!" chimed in Pearl, that devout upholder of woman's dignity.

"There is but one course left for you, and that is, for me to write and end all communication in your name," resumed Miss Clementina's frigid tones.

Sunshine was very pale. To have her fears of the Rocksilver confirmed was not welcome. "He loves me now," she said, hurriedly; "it is nothing whom he has liked before."

"What! you call such an outrage 'nothing!'" shrieked Miss Clementina—"You think it 'nothing' for another woman to have his picture and his love-letters!" cried Rosebud.

Sunshine's eyes grew dark; she spoke bitterly and passionately, as she felt, and Miss Clementina gazed at her aghast. She collapsed under the horrible suggestion that her life could, under any provocation whatsoever, have by any possibility borne any comparison with Randolph Gordon's! She regarded Sunshine with stern despairing pity, reserving her grand coup for the last.

"Very well, you do as you please, of course; but I forbid that man *my* house!"

I was breakfasting the next morning, when Randolph came in *sans cérémonie* and threw himself down on a sofa.

"Cosmo, I want you to do something for me."

"A *votre service*. What is it?"

"Why," said Randolph, lashing his boots impatiently, "I sent a groom over this morning to Audley Court with a letter to Miss Clementina, telling her I loved her niece, and wished to make her my wife. Nobody else in the county would take it as an offence, I should fancy—rather *au contraire*, wouldn't you say? I must confess, however, there's no knowing what one may come to? Well, what does my man bring me back in return but a cold and frigid little document, written in the most buckramish hand, expressing her conviction that Sunshine will go to the devil her own way, but repudiating the connexion, and forbidding me the house. Did you ever know anything more cursedly annoying? Deuce take the women—all but one. What on earth shall I do?"

"Have you heard from Sunshine?"

No. I promised her last night to go and ride out with her at twelve, but I can't go now. I won't force myself into anybody's house, not even for her sake; and yet not to see her! Heaven knows what lies the Rocksilver mayn't have told her about me and those confounded letters of mine too. Stay, I'll write a line to Sunshine, and you'll take it for me. Give it to her maid, that nice little Frenchwoman, you know. Will you?"

And drawing the paper and inkstand to him, he dashed off at express speed his one line, alias his three or four sheets.

"Now go and find Marie, there's a good fellow," said

he, when he had finished. "Gallop all the way there if you've any pity in your composition."

With which he fairly pushed me out of my own room, and sent me galloping down the road that led to Audley Court, and I thought myself in wonderful good luck when, as I rode through the lodge gates, I lighted on Marie, flirting with the head gardener.

"Non, je ne prendrai pas la lettre," said she with a shake of her glossy-tressed head. "Madame sa tante ne le veut pas."

"Mais Monsieur le Colonel le veut; vous ferez tout pour lui, Marie," said I, thrusting half a sovereign into her little plump fingers.

"Ah! le Colonel!" laughed Marie; "mais oui. Il est bien beau ce monsieur, mais il est bien méchant aussi, je pense: et—monsieur, je n'ose pas!"

"Si, si, Marie, vous le donnerez à mademoiselle, j'en suis bien sûr; vous ferez tout pour servir à l'amour, n'est-ce pas?" said I, as I put the letter in her hand, and reinforced my request with another little bit of gold, and such a caress as soubrettes, on and off the stage, have expected from time immemorial.

"Fi donc! monsieur!" cried Marie, taking the letter with a laugh, when—oh horror of horrors!—in a gardening costume, with gauntlets too large for the stoutest corporal in Randolph's Coldstreams, and dress looped up to show most strong-minded balmorals, a broad hat on her brow, some cuttings in her hand, and on her face the greatest wrath that ever mortal lineaments portrayed, that evil genius of East Toadyshire—I saw Miss Clementina!

How I repassed those lodge gates I can't tell you. I turned my mare's head, with some faint hope that Miss Clementina mightn't recognise me, and I tore back along

the road, heaping curses, loud and deep, on Randolph's love, which ten to one had cost me mine.

"Well, did Marie take my letter?" asked Randolph, eagerly, as he stood smoking on my hearth-rug, when I reached home, after riding as if all the furies had been after me.

"Yes," said I, savagely; "and I wish you had been at the devil before you'd given it me."

"Bien obligé! What's the row?"

I told him, and he looked deeply sympathising when I had.

When Randolph and I had done luncheon, a groom from Audley Court brought two notes. Randolph tore his open; I held mine, touching it as fearfully as if it were a Brinvilliers's poisoned billet.

"Well, what does Miss Pearl say to you, old fellow?" asked Randolph, as he crushed his up and put it into his breast-pocket, looking as radiant as a man might whose horse had won "the blue riband of the turf."

"Say?" I repeated savagely, "why, that after what her aunt has told her she witnessed this morning, everything must be at an end between us."

"The devil she does!" interrupted Randolph. "She hain't lived with Miss Clementina for nothing, then. Does she expect to find a man like Trollope's impossible Arabin, who touches a woman's lips for the first time, we are told to believe, at forty! On my life, Cosmo, how grieved I am!"

"She's heard some garbled tale of it," said I, hoping against hope, with valor worthy a volunteer. "I'll see her before night; I'll make her hear me at the least. Women often say more than they mean. Is Sunshine kinder to you, pray?"

"God bless her little heart, yes!" said Randolph, em-

phatically. "I told you my 'little devil' was true metal, Lyle."

That evening Randolph leaned over the white gate that parted one of the paddocks of Audley Court from a bridle-path, talking to Sunshine, confessing his sins, and receiving his absolution.

"You, see, my pet," he was saying, half laughing, after graver converse, "we men are very often like that luckless bee Mr. Gosse tells us of, who, catching sight of a *crascicornis*, mistook it for a flower, and darting delightedly on to its tentacles, was hooked, impaled, and swallowed. We see what we fancy very beautiful flowers, we fly down to taste the honey of eye love, and our seemingly innocent rose thrusts out its thorns, and impales us there long after it has ceased to have any fragrance for us, and we have found out our foolish mistake. Such was my love for Mrs. Rocksilver, and others like her, but it was not love of which you need be jealous, nor love that I could ever feel after that I bear for you. You will not visit my sins upon me, Sunshine?"

Sunshine, that keen satirist, whose wicked tongue all his corps feared, lifted her face to his with a smile, half *méchanceté*, half of tenderness, a little bit saddened that he should have loved so many before her, but wholly trustful that he would love her alone in the future.

"No; you told me yourself that two days would be the extent of your fidelity to any one, still I am not afraid to trust you, *méchant* though you are."

Randolph bent over the gate, and thanked her so fervently, that it was a very fortunate thing Miss Clementina was then pouring her woes into Mrs. Tomtit's ear before dinner, and was not there to have her nerves startled with a third severe galvanic shock. At that same hour I was vainly entreating Pearl to hear reason,

which that young lady as absolutely declined to hear, being in a state of most dignified wrath, and that frame of mind in which her sex talk nineteen to the dozen, and give Lynch law verdicts with the greatest ruthlessness and severity. I had managed to catch her walking on the terrace, and pleaded my cause with an eloquence which I should have thought calculated to touch the most flinty heart. But Pearl was more than flint, and wouldn't even listen to a plea. Disengaging her hand without looking at me, she swept off into the house like a young empress.

In the high road Randolph and I met. He was riding, smoking, with a most contented smile on his lips.

"I owe you a fiver," said I, with pardonable bitterness, considering that it was through being his postman that I had lost my fiancée. "You were right; your 'little devil' has pardoned all your past, and her sister won't forgive me a bit of harmless nonsense in a friend's cause. Like a fool, helping you to trap your sunbeam I've shut myself out of Audley Court, and every ray of Pearl's favor; and how the deuce I shall get back into either is far more than I can guess!"

VI.

HOW SPIRITUALISTIC AGENCY WAS BROUGHT IN FOR MATERIAL PURPOSES.

SUNSHINE was so determined to have her own way, and so very satirical upon those who opposed her, that people were speedily tired of doing so, and Randolph got

the entrée of Audley Court on a sort of suffrance and condition that he would not long pollute its walls with his presence, but rid it both of himself and of his "little devil." Freddy, who had his own way in everything, the only soul on earth that Miss Clementina worshipped and listened to, gave her a blowing up for rejecting his captain's offer. Sunshine avowed her unswerving loyalty to her âme damnée, and Miss Clementina had to give in, for the very first time in her maiden existence! She permitted Randolph to come to her house, but treated him with frigid hauteur, which was intended to show him she had not forgiven his faux pas. Not so fortunate was I; no re-entry could I make into Audley Court; its doors were fast closed against me. Randolph's intervention, Sunshine's artillery, Freddy's mediation, were all powerless in my cause. Pearl was inflexible, and Miss Clementina backed her, glorying in the fact that one, at least, of her poor brother's children had some sense of womanly dignity, and could resent an insult and revenge men's shameless levity.

Pearl was lost. Nohow could I regain her; not even gain her ear again; and bitterly did I anathematise that evil day when I had been mad enough to play the part of Randolph's postman.

The doors of Audley Court were closed against me, and there seemed no chance of my ever getting inside them again, not even to plead for mercy with my cruel and relentless fiancée, till one day, after drill, little Freddy came to me—the good-natured little fop was heart and soul my friend.

"Lyle, I've thought of something."

"You *thought*, Freddy! what a phenomenon! Well, what did you think about?"

"A way to get you inside the Court, to have a good lark,

and to bring Miss Pearl to reason," answered Freddy. "You know the old lady's rampant about spiritualism and all that humbug; she's heard of the séances in town, and she's crazy to have one of the mediums down here. She got me to write to one of 'em, to know their terms. I didn't post the letter—I have it in my pocket now—and I thought if you'd take the rôle (you're a good ventriloquist and a capital actor, and you learnt some legerdemain of Houdin) we would soon get up the rest of the clap-trap, and you might say something, as if from the spirits, you know, that might bring Pearl to reason, eh? It would be such a lark, you know. Do; we won't tell Gordon or Sunshine, because, though they'd do anything in the world to help you, they'd be certain to laugh, they couldn't help it. We'll only tell Marie. Come along, Lyle; let's talk it over. You'll never see Pearl unless you take her by storm, and it would be such fun to do Aunt Tina."

Freddy's suggestion, seemingly wild and visionary at first glance, grew more practicable on consideration. After a good deal of talking over and reiterated persuasion from him, who was egotistically eager for it, as "such a lark," it assumed a guise of possibility, and I consented to turn medium.

It was about a fortnight after I had lost alike my fiancée and my bet, when Miss Clementina, on the tiptoe of expectation, and with her nerves strung to the highest pitch of reverential excitement, invited her beloved friend, Mrs. Tomtit, to be present at a séance. Mrs. Tomtit, on the strength of many wonders of lively-minded tables and gossiping ghosts that had been revealed to her on a recent visit to town, was a firm believer in the new arch-humbug, rejected any rational explanation of her beloved miracles as disgustingly as a

divine would of his, and was, therefore, considered eligible by Miss Clementina to be present at a séance for which she had engaged a celebrated London medium, who, like all other mediums, would only transact his celestial affairs if he was paid for it, and appeared to carry his spirits about with him, as the showman carries his Punch and Judy, beadle and devil, in a box, till called for and paid for their performances. The spirits won't perform for nothing, any more than Punch will give his "Too te too te too-o-o-e!" to the unremunerative small boys on the pavé.

I dressed myself that night with minute care, and, I may say, that no more venerable-looking individual than I ever turned away from a cheval-glass. I had a snowy beard, I had spectacles which shaded my eyes from all inquisitive gaze. I was seventy at the least; a most respectable person for the spirits to confide in. I was as thoroughly disguised as if detective A 1 had been after me; and satisfied myself as to its completeness when, ringing at our own door, and asking for myself, old Waters replied, without an idea of my identity, "Mr. Lyle is not at home, sir."

Freddy and Marie were my accomplices. We had selected a night when Randolph and Sunshine were going to dine with a cousin of his, for I wouldn't have had their keen eyes on me for any money. Miss Clementina was disposed to be more amiable to a medium than to any other thing on earth. Everything smiled propitious as I entered, and Freddy, meeting me in the hall, whispered, "All right—coast's clear—Marie's ready, and the iron's fixed to the drawing-room table—the oval one, remember."

They ushered me into the drawing-room; there Miss Clementina sat in state, the most imposing person that

can be imagined, calculated to inspire with solemnity and respect the spirit of Tom Wharton, or Mohun, or the "roaring boys" of the Restoration, or the wildest scamp going; there was little Mrs. Tomtit, tremendously excited, a little bit frightened, and ready to go into hysterics at any moment; there, too, was my granite-hearted fiancée, looking so handsome as she leant back in her chair, that I was on the point of forgetting my rôle and throwing myself at her daintily chaussés feet instantanément; and there was *not* Randolph and Sunshine, for which absenteeism I thanked Heaven devoutly, for no slight ordeal was it, I can tell you, with Miss Clementina's pitiless, and Pearl's haughty, and Rosebud's laughing, and the little Tomtit's inquisitive eyes upon me, when I knew that I had stolen into Audley Court in borrowed plumes, that I was making game of its mistress, and that one false step might be detection, and detection more irrevocable exile than before. But I summoned up my courage as became a Goosestep Volunteer, and opened the séance in due form. I was solemn, I was grandly dignified, I was deeply mysterious, as became a correspondent with an unseen world; I was a man after Miss Clementina's own heart; I believe I realised that Jack-o'-lantern ideal which she had been ever pursuing and never caught. I was certainly more imposing, with my snowy beard and my six feet of height, than some of those very fat and not remarkably impressive elderly females, who sometimes summon the dear departed from the darkness of the tomb into the gas-lights of a London drawing-room.

First of all I requested to have the room darkened; spirits, you know, don't admire light, it jars on their feelings, or exposes the ravages of time too much. One candle was left on a console at the far end of the room, which shed such a dim religious light, that, like very

many religious lights, it was as good as none at all. I heard Mrs. Tomtit shudder. "Isn't it awful?" whispered the little woman; to which Miss Clementina returned a short, stern, snappish "Pshaw!" under which Mrs. Tomtit collapsed, silenced by the superior energy of a mind greater than her own. There was a dull, grey, mysterious twilight, that made everything dark look black as night, and everything large, gigantic: a twilight of itself, quite a nightmare to any nervous susceptibilities, under which Rosebud murmured, "How horrid!" and the poor little Tomtit shivered till the bugles of her cap and the links of her bracelets rang a little chattering duet of terror, which so incensed Miss Clementina that she asked her sharply "if she thought the spirits would bite her?" which was a lowering, not to say ridiculous, view of the spirits' pursuits, quite in consonance with the nineteenth century view of them. It was a dim, mysterious twilight, and in it—having selected Freddy to read off the alphabet—I rapped on the drawing-room table, and asked the rosewood in courteous terms if the spirits were there—in its pillar and claw, in fact, which must be a very inconvenient domicile for some of them—for stout old Luther, par exemple—unless, indeed, the Silent Land have shrunk them to the size of homunculi. Then I struck the floor with my left foot, too slightly for anybody to see it; and my boot having a loose brass heel, which clicked easily, did the spirits' business *à ravir*, and announced—through my taps and Freddy's alphabet—that their excellencies were coming, with an amiable celerity they didn't always display, perhaps, in answering their duns' calls, or their wives' appeals, in a former state of existence; and at which supernatural evidence Mrs. Tomtit gave a little suppressed scream, and Miss Clementina was too much imposed to correct her. I

asked the spirits if they had any objection to the present company, and my boot gave me three taps, to answer me they had not, which was a great relief to me, as spirits, you know, are as averse to showing before an unbeliever as a clergyman is shy of opening argument with a clever secularist.

"The spirits are present with us," said I, in the most sepulchral tones to which I could force my voice.

"Oh! it's dreadful, Clementina?" sobbed Mrs. Tomtit. "I can see them, I can hear them, I can feel them. Oh! take me away, somebody! I can't bear it, it's so awful!"

"Be silent," said Miss Clementina's deepest tones, sunk to an awe-stricken whisper; "I can realize a presence not of earth, but it is ill becoming us to show timorous dread of any of the mysteries of life and death. Oh! good gracious! what's this?" screamed that dignified lady, with a shrill scream like a small rocket, changing from solemnity to terror.

"You are honored, madam; the spirits communicate personally with you," said I, in a reproving tone, as I drew back into my pocket, with that rapidity I had paid Robert-Houdin many a guinea to learn, a pair of long-handled pincers, with which I had nipped up a small portion of Miss Clementina's person.

"How mysterious! how awfully mysterious!" soliloquised the mistress of Audley Court. "What singular means they take of testifying their presence. My arm is painful now; it is really awful!"

"Awful—it is horrible!" sobbed the little vicereine. "Ah! oh! Clementina, they are pinching my ankles!"

"Silence!" said I. "Do you not recognize the presence of the Unreal and Impalpable?"

"Yes!" said Miss Clementina, Mrs. Tomtit, and Rosebud, in awe-stricken concert.

"Do you not feel their cold touch upon your brow, their ghostly breath upon your lips, their holy phantoms riding on the wings of night?"

"Yes!" they all sobbed in trio. Their voices were hardly to be heard, their nerves were strung up to the highest pitch. They felt, saw, heard anything and everything that could be suggested to their heated imaginations, and their fancy, warmed to fusion, would have taken any flights that mine had proposed to them. My miracles, signs, and wonders, like many others, owed their reality solely to the gullibility of my believers. I was in high spirits; I was succeeding *à ravir*; every one of my auditors was far too profoundly impressed with the terrors of the supernatural to have any material reason left with which to penetrate my eleusinia and see through my disguise. I was just proceeding a step further in the *séance*, and my spectators, with quivering nerves, clinging together in vague dread of palpable pinches and impalpable spirits, were quite ready to swallow any wonders I might summon from the nether world, when the drawing-room door opened, letting in a flood of outer light into our darkened spiritual temple, and I prayed wildly to the Auxerre carpet to open its velvet bosom and drop me down under the sheltering shade of one of its bright-hued bouquets, when—there entered Randolph and Sunshine.

"We are come back, Aunt Tina," laughed Sunshine. "The poor dear horses slipped down Catsmore Hill, and Sultan hurt his knees so much we hadn't the heart to take him on a whole five miles of heavy roads; the rains have made it so—— But what *are* you doing here? The lights are out, and——"

"Hush!" said Miss Clementina, impressively; "your interruption is most untimely; we are in the middle of a

séance. This gentleman—Mr. Muffles—is come down from London at my solicitation. You will oblige me by withdrawing.”

“Allow me to stay, Miss Audley,” said that confounded Randolph, with extreme solicitude, though *I* detected the laughter which made his voice shake, though he tried to control it. “I have always had the greatest desire to be present at a séance, and so, I know, has Sunshine. We will be very good—indeed we will.”

“I have no objection, of course, if Mr. Muffles has none,” said Miss Clementina, stiffly, turning to me.

“The spirits must be consulted, madam,” said I, wishing myself along with the spirits under the table, and cursing Freddy fiercely for his tomfoolery in leading me into such a madman’s lark, and hoping to Heaven Randolph would not recognize my voice. “The spirits answer in the negative: this lady and gentleman must not be present, they are disturbing influences,” said I, giving my taps, and spelling off my alphabet selon les règles.

“Your spirits are not over-courteous, Mr. Muffles,” said that abominable fellow, looking at me very keenly—so keenly that I thought if he did not see through spectacles, white wig, trickery, and all, it would be uncommonly odd, and most miraculously propitious. “It looks rather suspicious in them to be so careful of observation from any but orthodox believers; they should embrace the occasion of shaming the skeptical. Try them again or I shall think they have some private pique against me.”

And he looked at me so sharply, putting up his confounded eye-glass, that I saw if I did not let him stay he would make such miserable fun of the whole thing as would show me and my spirits up to everybody. I could

see he thought I was an impostor, and was very ready to have Lynch law upon me, and, stuck inextricably between the horns of a dilemma, in half-crazed despair I put the question to the spirits, and rapped out an unwilling permission.

"Since you are permitted to stay, Colonel Gordon, I must request you not to interrupt the séance with unbecoming levity," said my staunch apostle, Miss Clementina.

Randolph bowed, sat himself down by Sunshine on a couch, fixed his glass in his eyes, and fastened so stern a gaze upon me, that I felt my false heels, my pincers, my spirits, my legerdemain, my ventriloquism, were all being seen through, and penetrated, and rent into smithereens, and I trembled, shook, and shivered as no volunteer should ever have done, considering the amount of brag we make of what our Spartan courage would be—if it were tried. But I looked at Pearl in the *demi-lumière*. I thought of the old proverb of faint hearts. I remembered that brass may win where truth may fail. I made a dash at it, and, plunging in medias res up to my ears in spiritualistic temerity, told them the spirits would answer a question put by any or each of them.

"A daring fellow, that! but I am certain he's a humbug. How ever people in this wide-awake century can credit this tomfoolery, is the deepest problem to me," was the whisper I caught, to console me, of Randolph to Sunshine.

I put a bold face upon it, and turned round to him.

"You are a mocker, I perceive, sir. Have you any question you would wish answered?"

"Certainly," said Randolph. "Ask them, will you, if my father is right in his religious opinions, and how he feels in the other world?"

"The devil!" thought I; "was your father an orthodox gentleman, or a good-for-nothing vaurien, like yourself, I wonder? I knew he did something about the church-rates, but whether it was to hold them up or pull them down I couldn't for the life of me remember; so I compromised the matter, and tapped, and spelt a mild reply, which trimmed between extremes, like a parson of the "Broad Church," whose leanings are Low but patrons High, and answered him "Pretty well."

"Thank you," said Randolph; "there's a purgatory, then, I suppose, contrary to the Church of England, who doesn't allow any medium between angelic harps and perpetual happiness, and roaring fires and everlasting frying thereon."

I turned a deaf ear to his heretic mockery, and an attentive one to Mrs. Tomtit's quivering treble, who, with much fear and trembling, asked if the spirits could lend her any aid to the discovery of a very sweet brooch, with her little boy's hair in it, set with emeralds, recently lost; and when we spelt her out the spiritual assistance conveyed in the laconic sentence, "Look in your maid's boxes," her sense of the marvellous power employed, and the sublimity of spiritualism, was so overpowering that she could not resist the expression of it.

"Good gracious! Clementina, isn't it most extraordinary? I always knew that girl was a thief. I was perfectly certain of her. I will give her warning to-morrow. Who could be incredulous after such proofs as these?"

Altogether, I was going off in flying colors. Randolph didn't know where to pick a hole in me; Miss Clementina was deeply gratified with a reply concerning the immoral tendencies of the age; which entirely coincided with her own private sentiments. Pearl looked pale and excited, Rosebud puzzled; Mrs. Tomtit divided

between awe of the spirits and rejoicing over her beloved brooch; I was getting easy in saddle, and going on au grand galop, when Randolph's little devil, with true demoniacal mischief, asked, through my agency, where her younger brother was drowned? Now, I had never heard of her having any other brother than Freddy; I didn't know his name; I hadn't an idea when he'd died; whether he was locked up along with Franklin, or lying under the tropic suns of the Pacific, I couldn't for the life of me divine. With a cold perspiration all over me, in dread of making a mistake in designating the unlucky youth's watery grave, I answered her with a despairing recklessness of geography, "Off Caxamarquilla."

"I am much obliged," answered Sunshine, calmly: "but, *imprimis*, Caxamarquilla is an *inland* town in Peru; secondly, I never had a brother drowned; thirdly, I never had a younger brother at all. Your spirits must have gone wrong somehow or other, Mr. Muffles."

Oh, that Auxerre carpet and that one especial bouquet of roses and lilies just under my feet, how I would have prayed to it if it only had had ears to hear, to open and swallow me up, and hide me for evermore from human eyes; but, *sauve qui peut*, I had to acknowledge a blunder, but referred it à la professional medium, to the "disturbing influence," indicating Randolph, I put a good face on the blunder, and drew attention from it with a cool dexterity quite worthy a real medium, I assure you, by stretching out my hand to the oval table, which came after me as docilely as a well-trained dog, ambling amiably over the bright flowers in the carpet like a good-hearted but somewhat clumsy donkey, lifting its leg when I raised my hand and tilting forward on its nose when I depressed it in a lively and amusing manner, which quite covered over the slip of Caxamarquilla.

The table was quite a *lion* ; it danced so prettily it really might have learned of Madame Michaud-Davis ; everybody admired it, even Sunshine held her breath and looked puzzled ; but that wretch of a Randolph, how fearfully I hated him, once my Pylades, kept his abominable glass down upon me and it, and, stroking his moustache, called out, just as my table was turning round to come back to its place,

“ Miss Audley, that man is an impostor ; all that’s done with a magnet ; if you’ll allow me to search, I’ll wager any money I find a loadstone in his hand and a piece of iron fixed under your table.”

But my staunch ally and apostle, Miss Clementina, cut in and saved me with that determined obstinacy which, in many other disciples of other churches, passes current as “ faith.”

“ Profanity !” she muttered, disgusted, turning her back on her *bête noire*, as I led my table back in triumph, taking very good care that that confounded fellow shouldn’t catch a glimpse of the material means he had guessed at so shrewdly. But I determined to baffle him if I could, and with a severe solemnity worthy of Miss Clementina, I told him that the spirits would condescend to rebuke his mockery, and convince him against his profane prejudices : and with a bolder stroke than I think any medium ever ventured on before, I told him the secret thoughts of each should be revealed, and I tapped away in grand style, and charging at Randolph first, told him that he was wishing time to fly for the twenty-eighth of next month to come. Sunshine started and colored, and Randolph stared, though he whispered skeptically to her,

“ That is nothing, he could learn the day easy enough from the servants ; though certainly I must say the fellow’s hit on the truth ”

"You, madam," said I to Mrs. Tomtit, "are hoping your husband will get the deanery, and that your entremets, when the bishop dines with you on Tuesday, will beat Mrs. Babbicombe's hollow."

Mrs. Tomtit opened her lips and eyes, and sank back in her chair aghast; the deanery and the entremets *were* the objects of her extremest solicitude; she couldn't gainsay it.

"And you, young lady," said I, turning to Pearl, after a little more tapping and spelling, "are wishing that sharp words, spoken in a moment of irritation at fancied insult could be recalled, and the person whom you love be induced to forget them."

"He is right there, Pearl, I am sure," whispered Sunshine.

I caught Pearl's low-answering "Yes." And so did Randolph, for even he, the unbeliever, stroked his moustaches, puzzled and astonished, and tempted to think there *must* be something in it after all. As for me, I was in such a state of delirious ecstasy, that I tapped away at a mad canter, and, determined to pay Miss Clementina off for all she'd made me suffer, turned sharp on to her with a spiritual communication.

"And you, madam, are thinking that if your friend happened kindly to die, what a much better clergyman's wife you'd make in her stead for your old love, the Reverend Thomas Tomtit."

Mrs. Tomtit sprang from her chair with a shrill shriek, then fell back into it in hysterics, beating the carpet frantically with her little satin slippers.

"Perfidious wretch! My friend!—my bosom friend! Oh, Clementina, how I have trusted you! how I have loved you! and for what?"

Miss Clementina sat bolt upright, her eyeballs distend-

ed, her lips blanched, in an attitude of frozen horror. She, the immaculate spinster, the spotless, the spiritual, the virtuous, to whom love seemed a folly, thoughts of marriage profanity, to be told that she coveted her neighbor's husband, and committed murder in her thoughts!

I was at the culmination of my glory. I stretched my hand towards the end of the room: "See, the spirits themselves attest to my veracity!" and there, in the gloaming, stretched a white, shadowy, ghostly arm, tracing in phosphorus on the wall the words, "Scoffers beware and tremble!"

The Tomtit's shrieks redoubled; Pearl and Rosebud screamed; Miss Clementina sat staring at it, speechless as a marble statue; even Sunshine clung close to Randolph, but he—oh, devil take him!—sprang up. "By Jove! there's the spirit made manifest in the flesh, and no mistake! Let me go, my darling!" And striding over the room, my evil genius caught the ghostly arm with exceedingly material strength, and giving it no very gentle tug, Marie, standing perdue behind the curtains, fell forward, through the satin damask, into his arms.

"Oh, M. le Colonel, de grace! vous me faites du mal! Vous êtes si forts, vous autres Anglais!"

"Here's an abominable imposture!" said Randolph, angrily. "Miss Audley, you must allow me to go to the bottom of this. Your own servants are in the plot; we will soon sift it. As for this fellow, a month at the treadmill will do him a vast deal of good; he can practise his shams at leisure there." With which he seized hold of me, caught my snowy beard, which came off in his clutch, and let go his hold, falling back with my hirsute appendages dangling from his hand, fairly startled and bewildered for once in his life of skepticism and sang-froid: "Hallo!—Good Heavens!—By George!"

"What is it?" cried Sunshine, clinging to her lover.

"What's the matter?" screamed Rosebud, ringing the bell frantically.

"Thieves! fire! murder! help, help, somebody!" shrieked the incoherent and excitable Tomtit, beating that wild tattoo upon the carpet which passes under the suave cognomen of hysteria.

"*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! comme j'ai été bête!*" sobbed Marie.

"The devil! shan't we catch it, all of us!" moaned Freddy.

"By Jove! old, boy, I'm doomed to bring you to grief," sighed Randolph.

"Cosmo, is it you?" murmured Pearl, white as a veritable spirit herself.

Pearl looked up, a crimson flush on her face, excited, terrified, amazed.

Wild was the dismay; loud the chattering of tongues; fiercely rang Rosebud's peals at both the bells: awfully shrill rose the sharp shrieks of the prostrate Tomtit; great was the rush of many feet, as every domestic in the servants' hall poured in, confident that the "sperits" had been guilty of a double, triple, perhaps quadruple murder; and amidst the hubbub, the uproar, the fright, the screams, Miss Clementina sat bolt upright, as a marble goddess might sit unmoved amidst an Irish riot, with iron rigidity and stony eyeballs and paralysed nerves, and when she struggled for speech we caught the hoarse and solemn murmur,

"*I, to be—be told I love another woman's husband!—to live to be insulted thus!*"

Need I say that Marie was turned away the very next

morning ; Freddy nearly killed with the terrors of the Damocles' sword of disinheritance that was hung, in terrorum, above his head ; that Miss Clementina and Mrs. Tomtit never spoke again for ten whole days ; that I was forbidden the house in real and unrelaxing exile ; and never, while she lives, will its mistress pardon me the insults of that séance. Dire as the wrath is, however, I have strength to bear it, for when I was turned from the house in majestic fury that night, somebody else followed me out under the stars, and I asked her not in vain this time, " Pearl, will you forgive me now ? " As for Randolph and Sunshine, the misery Miss Clementina prophesied for them is very bearable at present, I believe, though two days after that longed for " twenty-eighth," Randolph, sitting in a window looking on to Windermere, put down his *Times*, and took the mouth of his hookah out of his lips, when he saw Sunshine standing by him, buttoning her gloves, with her hat on, and otherwise got up in general walking costume.

" Where are you going, my pet ? " he asked ; " it's only just eleven. I haven't done smoking, nor even looked at the *Times*. It's so very early to turn out, don't you think ? "

" Yes ; but I am going by myself," answered his nouvelle mariée.

" By yourself ! I dare say I'll let you," laughed Randolph, amazed. There were no shops on the lake, and for this period of sublimated existence he had chosen, exprès, a county in which he hadn't a single acquaintance to bother him and spoil his elysium.

Sunshine held out her hand to him, with an expression of deep-seated melancholy on that radiant face which had gained her sobriquet, and a sigh loud enough to be heard over Windermere.

"I am come to bid you good-by!"

"To bid—me—good-by!" re-echoed Randolph, startled into genuine anxiety and the greatest amazement. "My darling Sunshine, what is the matter? What do you mean—what has happened?"

Sunshine shook her head with another profound sigh, and held out her hand a second time.

"Don't you remember telling me that if ever you married, two days would be the extreme of your fidelity to any woman? I don't wish to try your patience, nor yet to wait to be turned out, so I am come to take leave of you; but we can part in peace, you know, and I won't speak *very* badly of you. Good-by, monsieur."

Randolph shouted with laughter, then caught her up in his arms and kissed her fifty times. What further answer he gave is not upon record, but I suppose it was a vow to be faithful to her for a few days more at the least, for he and his "little devil" are not likely to part as yet.

HOW ONE FIRE LIT ANOTHER.

HOW ONE FIRE LIT ANOTHER ;

OR,

THE MISCHIEF DONE BY MY PHOTOGRAPH.



I.

ROYSTON TREVELYAN.

WE had been up the Mer de Glace that afternoon, stretching our legs over the ice plains, leaping the crevasses, and broiled like a salmon over a Highland fire in the scorching ride homeward ; but now we had got cool, and calm, and comfortable again, as we sat smoking and drinking, and doing the *dolce* in the window of an hotel in Chamounix, on the evening of the 19th July, 1855.

I belong to Lincoln's Inn, if you wish to know, where I hang out, keep a boy as sharp as a needle, and a constant supply of French novels and Brighton Tipper, but never can manage to find any brief that will keep *me* ; so, having a fancy to do Switzerland once more, I had nothing to retard me, and armed with a passport, a wide-awake, photographic implements, and innumerable bottles, with which I had ruined my hands, iron-moulded one dozen Corazzas irrecoverably, and yet could not prevail on myself to leave behind me, set out forthwith." At

Duomo d'Ossoli I fell in with the man I like the best of anybody going, Royston Trevelyan, and we came on together with the fellow he was travelling with, Popham, Lord Freshlacquers's son; and in the window at Chamonix sat these "spirits twain" with me. They are about as unlike as a sturdy rough shooting pony is unlike a Derby winner in high condition, Pop being a short, square, little chap about eighteen, with red whiskers, and merry eyes, who, well mounted, will, however, look all over like going, and finds his mission lie in the open rather than the drawing-room. Trevelyan, *au contraire*—though I can witness that his strong muscles tell in a slashing stroke through a heavy swell, a firm hand on the ribbons, and a hit from the straightening of his left arm calculated to send down a man like an ox—is graceful and well knit rather than herculean or robust, and his face—— Well, if you had seen its proud regular features, *veloutés* eyes, and beautiful mouth, it would probably have haunted you, mademoiselle, as, one way or another, it has haunted a good many.

"Horrid slow place, ain't it?" growled little Pop, obscuring himself in smoke.

"No, I like that old fellow," answered Trevelyan, indicating Mont Blanc, with his pipe-stem. "Look at him now, with the sunset glow on him! Glorious, by George! better than a drop scene, or a race course, or the Cremorne lamps to look at."

Pop made me a wry face.

"Hum! Well, give me a two-year-old, with his body clothing off, and Frank Butler on his back, against all the old piles of snow that ever provoked one to break one's neck climbing up 'em; and as for the sunset—what d'ye call it—I vow the glow on Eudoxie's cheek, though it is rouge, is ten times prettier."

Trevelyan smiled quizzically and contemptuously.

"You're new to your game, Pop. By-and-by you'll find it so tame and stale, like pheasant shooting with birds that come down of their own accord to be shot, that you'll be glad to come out into the woods and hills for a little bit of nature. One may look so long at the gas flowers of Mabilie that one is glad to take a turn at the Alpine clochettes for a change."

"Eh?" said Pop, slightly bewildered. "Do you mean you'd rather gather a handful of those weeds than have a turn at that divine Closerie des Lilas?"

"When I am bored by the Closerie des Lilas—yes."

"Hum!" meditated Pop. "Well, I was never bored in Paris, and *am* bored here; horribly bored, I confess!"

Trevelyan shrugged his shoulders.

"Sorry for you, mon cher. Stars are holes in the sky to Hodge, and living worlds to Herschel. If you weren't born with any perception of nature, I suppose you can't help yourself?"

"No, and don't want."

"What a merciful provision, isn't it, Temple," laughed Trevelyan, "that young cubs like this, created blind and deaf, don't pine their lives out for other people's eye-glasses and oral nerves?"

"Don't poke fun at a fellow," growled Pop. "You've a big brain-box, and shouldn't sneer at a man who hasn't."

"I brains! My dear boy, you're quite wrong, I assure you. I might have had, perhaps, if I'd gone on working them when I left Cambridge, but they're all run to seed now—smoked away in Cavendish and fuddled away in your favorite Chaumière, and driven away by wandering up and down the earth, and walking to and fro on it."

"How is it, then," said I, "if a fellow wants to know

anything—if it's about a place in the Antipodes, the best recipe to brown a gun or waterproof his boots, the last news by the telegraph or the latest start in science, the newest fly for trolling or the best view of politics—you have it all at your fingers' ends, and can tell him no end about any of them?"

"Nonsense!" said Trevelyan. "I go about with my eyes open, of course, and pick up a smattering here and there; but it's much like what the old French chiffonniers pick up in their rag-baskets—worthless bits of glass and straw and dirty rubbish out of all the puddles, and very seldom a Nap or so with the true ring about it. Look out on your own account, both of you, and you won't think much of my collection. The magicians were very great guns to poor Pharaoh, but now we have Houdin and Frikell, they don't greatly impose upon us."

"Confound you! Royston. Why will you always run yourself down?" I said.

"I don't run myself down. I only speak the truth, and I want Pop there not to bow in that idiotic way before a gingerbread god. If he go and deify me, he'll come to a large amount of grief."

"What are those lines," began Pop, diving into the recesses of his memory as a landlord dives into his lower cellars for the '15 port when he finds you too wide awake to swallow South African. "I turned 'em into Greek hexameters, I know, at Eton—at least, that young devil Brigham did for me. I don't know whose they are—Tennyson's, I fancy:

Knowledge is humble—

no, that ain't it:

Knowledge is proud—

Ah! that's the ticket—

Knowledge is proud that she has learnt no more,
Wisdom is humble that she knows no more.

That suits Trevelyan, don't it, Temple?"

"Me?" cried Trevelyan, laughing. "Thank you, old fellow, but I'm afraid I can't lay more claim to wisdom than a *passée* beauty to naïve simplicity. But, for mercy's sake, you young Goth, don't go giving the credit of those lines to Tennyson. He couldn't pen anything so sensible to save his life, though, while he smokes his darling tobacco, he can turn on love and bosh like Imperial gas, at so much per foot; and a very good trade he makes of it, too, half the world being spooneys, whom he saves the trouble of writing their love-letters, and the other half, fools, who always join in crowning Aristides or in ostracising him, whichever chance to be the fashion."

"Who did write 'em, then?" asked Pop.

"A man who compressed more meaning and more wit into one of his polished periods than our poets run mad can get into quarto volumes of their maundering sentimentalities or meaningless satire. They talk of the Temple of the Ideal; I take it the Muses got better served in the grotto at Twickenham."

"The Star and Garter, you mean," interrupted Pop, who was half listening and half absorbed in settling his pipe. "Of course, they wait on you well there, and prettily they make you pay for it, too; but that's at Richmond, not Twickenham. Come, old boy, I've caught *you* tripping now. What are you two fellows laughing at?"

"Nothing," said I; "only you *are* the greatest goose, my boy, that ever wore a coronet."

“‘Mais quelle latitude énorme!’” quoted Trevelyan.

“I’m wide awake enough in some things,” protested Pop; “I should like to see the man who’d do me with a bit of horseflesh; and as for dogs, there’s not a better judge of a young pup than I am.”

“Your own species, *mon enfant*,” said Trevelyan.

“Get out,” growled Pop; “you always make game of a fellow—never was such a hard hitter. However, I don’t care; if I haven’t brains, I shall have forty thousand a year, and people will make believe I’m a Solon.”

“A Solan goose, then,” laughed Trevelyan. “Ah, there come those fellows. Lascelles looks seedy; he’s soon done up.”

The two fellows alluded to were two acquaintances of Trevelyan’s we had lighted on the day before; one of them, Oakes, a man with a thousand or so a year, which all went in supposititious early masters—*very* early ones indeed, done out of all drawing, and admirably smoked by young Giotto, of Poland street—he having the misfortune to be bitten by pre-Raphaelitism; and the other, Lascelles, a tolerably rich fellow also, who always lived abroad, having a nice villa at Florence, and was much set upon by young ladies in consequence, but affected nil admirari-ism, and took none of them. He was good-looking—with the exception of an intolerably hooked nose—and well informed, but, somehow or other, I never could like him; at football, I remember, he invariably had his shins so kicked that he was laid up for a fortnight.

“Well,” said he, as they came through the window and sat down with us, “I’ve been thinking we were great donkeys to go up that snow hill only just to come down again. We’ve done it all before, and it was so confoundedly hot.”

“I don’t think so,” said Trevelyan; “it’s always good

to stretch one's muscles, and those guides are such plucky fellows! the best men I've seen for a long time."

"It's their trade," answered Lascelles: "we pay them for it."

"But every man doesn't do what he's paid for, or your uncle, Lascelles, would not pocket fourteen hundred a year in tithes, and keep abroad for his health nine months out of the twelve. However, his parish may benefit by that, so I won't sit in judgment. By George!" cried Trevelyan, "look there! there's the girl you fell in love with at the Cascade des Pélerins, Pop. Look! the other side of the street."

"Ain't she a little dear!" cried Pop, enthusiastically; "so neat about the pasterns—stands up so clean!"

"She'd look nice properly dressed," observed Oakes, critically; "take away that crinoline, and give some long blue flowing robe."

"That would make her look like a broomstick with clothes on by accident," said Trevelyan; "perhaps you'd like to redden her hair whilst you're about it, Oakes?"

"Too petite—nothing much in her," sneered Lascelles, who loved to find spots on the sun.

"Deuced good walk, though, and nice complexion," went on the more material Pop. "Just the right size. I never like 'em more than fifteen hands high—I mean—confound it, what *do* I mean?—Trevelyan, what's the right height for a woman?"

"Opinions differ, my dear boy; one man likes one thing, one another. It depends, too, on the rôle you want her to play, whether it's the stately, dignified Venus Victrix, to keep her lovers in subjection and henpeck her husband, or whether to go in for the Dickens's Dora stakes, to play with us as a kitten plays with a ball of cotton, always mischievous, and always unpunished."

"Which is your style?"

"Oh, the last. I should hate a wife whom I should have to keep like a Parian statuette under a glass case, and only touch respectfully with a feather-duster. I should like somebody not above talking nonsense and being petted, but with head and pluck of her own nevertheless. Give me a butterfly in the sunshine against the handsomest iceberg going." And Trevelyan lifted his glass at the one under disquisition, who had nothing of the iceberg about her as she walked along, as if she enjoyed herself, and wished all the world to do the same.

Trevelyan beckoned a Swiss to him.

"Philippe, dites-moi qui est cette jeune demoiselle, qui se promène là-bas avec le vieux monsieur."

"Ils zont M'sieu et Ma'amselle Luard," responded Philippe, in his vile patois, "v'nus par vetturino de St. Géant il y a deux jours, milor."

"Est-elle dong ce maisong?" asked Pop.

"Si, M'sieu."

"Philippe," laughed Trevelyan, "je n'ai point de titre. C'est ce monsieur-ci qui est milor."

"Est-ce possible?" cried Philippe, naïvely. "Mais c'est vous, M'sieu, qui a l'air de milor."

Pop screamed with laughter.

"Bravo, Philippe, you're a discerning individual, though you have lived up in these blessed mountains all your days. Tip me the Cavendish. Donnez-moi le baccy. Grazia. I say, how confoundedly tired I am. Ain't you? I shall just finish this pipe and turn in."

We were all done up, and turned in early, there being no lansquenet, Cremorne, ballet, or oyster supper, not even the ghost of milk punch, or the shadow of a pack of cards to keep us awake, only the stars coming out over the high white peaks and low Alpine valley, which none

of us cared to see except Trevelyan, who walked up and down the little wooden bridge over the Arve for half an hour to enjoy them or his pipe in peace.

Philippe was quite right that "milor" suited Trevelyan much better than Pop, insomuch as the one was a gentleman in birth, manners, and mind, while the other never was a gentleman, and never could be, and graced it not at all.

Trevelyan was a physician—none of your Edinburgh, Aberdeen, or 10*l.* German diploma men, but a graduate of Trinity, and a regular Cambridge and London *bona fide* M.D. Very clever he was ; yet not clever enough to go quietly with the tide, humor people's prejudices, and humbug them with homœopathy; not patient enough, moreover, for the steady climb through long years of hospital practice and self-mortification that lead a London physician to the top of the hill. He was rather addicted to roaming, too; and as patients are not overpleased at finding their practitioner gone off to Rome, or Baden, or Norway, at all sorts of irregular seasons, Royston, having some small means of his own, had not tied himself down anywhere to turn his splendid intellectual powers into tin, but lived here and there at his will. Just now, the Earl of Freshlacquers, who had been an old friend of his father's, was giving him a good lot of tin to act as bear-leader to his only son. A stronger young Antæus than sturdy, red-haired, open-hearted, wooden-headed little Pop never breathed, but Freshlacquers, trembling over the heir to his Brummagem coronet as an old hen over a duck she has reared when she sees it go into the water, always rode as his pet hobby that Pop's lungs were affected, and on Pop's leaving Eton begged and prayed Trevelyan to watch assiduously over his scion's body and soul. Trevelyan was happy to make the tin—

he was rather fond of Pop, too, in a way, enjoying his freshness and zest for pleasure—Freshlaquers was delighted to get a thorough-bred man of talent to lick his rough cub into shape; so Royston acquiesced, only stipulating that he might give the boy his swing, to which the Earl, who had unbounded respect for his opinion, consenting, the boy had his swing, and uncommonly enjoyed it too, though whether petits-verres, the bouquet of Lafitte, suppers in cabinets particuliers, &c. &c, are approved recipes for health, I cannot say. I fell in with these two, as I told you, at Duomo d'Ossoli, and delighted I was, for if I *do* love any man it is Royston, and we naturally went on together. He's a capital companion at home or abroad; at a tête-à-tête dinner with him in his own rooms, or at a table d'hôte at the Bads, I must say he's delightful; and though he is occasionally restless and dissatisfied, and given to the mood of that keen-sighted man Solomon the Preacher, he was enjoying himself just now, throwing himself into the physical exertion with no end of verve, and enjoying the free, untrammelled, wandering life under the blue skies of the god of his idolatry—Nature.



II.

FLORESTINE LUARD.

“THE hotel's on fire! the hotel's on fire!” Not pleasant words, *ami lecteur*, to startle you out of your slumbers, particularly when you are dead beat, and feel nothing in the world would make you get up short of the advent of a Venus Aphrodite out of the Arve. —

I sprang out of bed, confounding everything and everybody, to find Chamounix on fire, and our hotel too. I rushed into Trevelyan's room and found him up, with lit le Pop; the one looking cool and calm, the other curiously attired, and helplessly sleepy.

"What the devil *are* you doing, Royston?" said I. "Don't you know the hotel's on fire? Packing butterflies, as I live! Well, that is a rum idea, when everybody else is running for his life."

"If everybody else is a fool, that's no reason why I should be one too," laughed Trevelyan, putting up his moths and butterflies carefully. "Look! we are all right, my windows open on the garden. Let's carry the trunks out there, and then we'll go and help the poor wretches."

Badly enough the poor wretches wanted help, being utterly incapable themselves of any sane or rational action. 'Pon my life, when we got outside, and found ourselves in the midst of the row, our first impulse was to laugh. To an Englishman, it was so *very* queer to see those unlucky Swiss flinging themselves on their knees, and crying, and sobbing, instead of trying to put the fire out. Who that was at Chamounix that day forgets how the little nest under the shelter of Mont Blanc was licked up by piles of wood and shops, the flames that hissed down to the edge of the Arve, and leaped over the low roofs, how the peasants wrung their hands, and the curés moaned and sighed, and the English tourists worked the one little hand-engine, passed the water, cleared out the furniture, and did all the good that was to be done in that luckless little Alpine village? I wish you had all seen Trevelyan that day; 'pon my word he was grand! He was everywhere, stirring up the Swiss, setting the muleteers and guides to work, giving the priests a

good shake, and passing the tubs and buckets, flinging the water with all his might, loading himself with everything he could happen upon, carrying chairs, tables, and crockery, swearing at the peasants, and laughing all the while, as he fused his own energy into all the others round him.

"Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!" moaned Philippe, on his knees, "nous va mourir!"

Trevelyan gave him a kick. "Get up, you fool! God helps those who help themselves."

A curé was lifting his eyes to heaven, spilling the water on the ground in an ecstasy of prayer. Royston shook him by the arm. "Work—pass the water—don't sing psalms; that water's worth more than your words."

On went the fire, and on he worked, the life and soul of us all, doing more in five minutes with his quick wit and unerring strength than all those poor devils did in an hour, crying and sobbing while their houses were burning down. Suddenly he swung round: "By Jove! where's that little girl Luard? I haven't seen her anywhere; have you?"

Nobody had seen either her or her father among the crowd, and Philippe threw himself on the ground, tearing his hair out in handfuls:

"Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! je les ai oubliés. Scélérat! meurtrier! Pourquoi vivez-vous?"

"Why, indeed, since you're no more use than a block of stone?" said Trevelyan, wrathfully. "Where do they sleep?"

"Numéros 2 et 4," sobbed Philippe. Before we could stop him, Trevelyan had rushed up the smoking, creaking staircase, charred and rotten, and perilous to the last degree. Pop dashed after him, so did I; but he pushed us down.

“Back, back, I say. Take care of that boy, Temple; his life’s of value.”

Away he went again, to his own imminent peril; then we lost him in the smoke, and I give you my word, sir, my heart beat fast, like a woman’s, and I’d have seen all Chamounix go to the inferno cheerfully rather than a hair of his head should have been injured, dear old fellow! The Swiss looked after him with open eyes and mouths. I believe the prevalent idea was that he was some heaven-sent St. Michael or other, and Pop grasped my arm in tremulous excitement.

“By Jupiter! if anything happen to him I’ll kill them every man Jack of ’em, dirty goitred brutes! Bravo, here he comes! If he isn’t a brick, nobody ever was!” Come he did back again down the smoking, splitting staircase, with a girl in his arms wrapped up in a blanket, and an old gentleman hastily enveloped in a voluptuous dressing-gown following them, looking decidedly astonished, and considerably peevish. A blanket is not an embellishing toilette, but nevertheless Trevelyan, I believe, liked the look of his charge, with her pale face, and her hair streaming over her shoulders, a good deal better than of many women he’d seen got up in tulle illusion and jewelry. She was clean gone in a faint; so Trevelyn carried her to the hotel across the Arve, bestowed some of his skill on her, waited till he saw the color coming into her cheeks, and her eyelids trembling, and then, very self-denyingly, I thought, left her in the care of one of the lady tourists, with a brief “She’ll do now,” and set to work again with the fire brigade, and to such purpose that, as everybody knows, even if Albert Smith has not told him, the great fire of Chamounix was out and over by mid-day.

All Chamounix blessed Trevelyan, not only for the

help in getting the fire turned, and the infusion of some degree of sanity among them, but for the preservation of their luckless chairs, and tables, and crockery, which the mountaineers couldn't have replaced in a hurry; and were ready to prostrate themselves at his feet and worship him as their tutelar saint. A questionable honor, since, as he remarked, those beatified gentlemen had not had the best reputation on earth, and had bought their canonisation cheaply, as saints have a knack of doing even to this day.

I dare say the thanks that pleased him most were Florestine Luard's, who, catching sight of him, seized hold of his hand, and thanked him for saving her life, with the most tremendous eloquence in her words, looks, and eyes. Trevelyan looked down on her with his smile, that is like sunshine when it comes. "Indeed, you have nothing to thank me for; any one of my friends would have been delighted to have done the same."

"But I should have died without you!"

He smiled again. "Well, you were rather near being scorched, perhaps; but I assure you there was nothing in my simply mounting a staircase to require your gratitude, though you more than repay me by it."

"And it will not be less because you lay so little claim to it," said Florestine, very earnestly. "I see you do not like to be thanked, but you must let me say what I feel for papa and myself,"

At that juncture "papa" came up—a very gentleman-like individual, who had evidently been a beau, and was now a philosopher—and who thanked Trevelyan as if he was thanking a man for a present of game, or an invitation to shoot over a manor, as they exchanged cards. "Very much obliged to you, indeed, Mr.—Mr. Trevelyan. It was very good of you to remember us, and I am

deeply indebted to you for rescuing my daughter so promptly. Trevelyan! Are you any relation to the Trevelyans of Cornwall?"

"John Trevelyan of Chetwoode was my father's brother," said Royston.

"Indeed! I know him intimately. I shot over Chetwoode last October. I am very glad to find a relative of his in our brave deliverer. I hope we shall see more of each other. Dine with me to-night, Mr. Trevelyan, and you too Mr. Temple—at least, if one can get any dinner to-day in this miserable place. I always bring a few civilised edibles into these outer barbarian holes, or one would be quite famished. Florestine says she likes strawberries and goat's milk, but I must say I prefer ortolans and hock. By the way, how rarely one finds an ortolan that is not a lark! Au revoir, monsieur; you will find us migrated to the other side of the water. Your friend will come with you. What should we have done if all the hotels had been burnt?"

Away went Mr. Luard, as young at seventy as if he had been forty; and Lascelles (who being domiciled in the aforesaid hotel on the safe side of the water, had contented himself with leaning out of his window with his pipe in his mouth, and looking on at the fire) lounged up to us.

"I congratulate you, Trevelyan. You've played an interesting rôle, and made a pleasant acquaintance. Uncommon lucky, 'pon my life!"

"I say, Trevelyan," interrupted little Pop, who had singed off a quarter of his red whiskers, and looked, being unwashed, more like a bit of charred wood than an Englishman—"I say, ain't it jolly? I *do* like that girl immensely!"

"I wish Millais had seen her before he'd painted 'The Rescue,'" said Oakes.

"I don't," said Royston. "He'd have given her car-roty hair and a large mouth to a certainty. He can't himself—he's no idea of a pretty woman."

"I don't admire her much," sneered Lascelles; "she's so shockingly demonstrative—so much *effusion*. No well-bred lady——"

"Well-bred fiddlesticks!" interrupted Pop, contemptuously. "When you've saved a girl's life the least she can do is to thank you warmly! Hang it! I hate a woman who'd give you a bow, and wait to speak to you till etiquette allowed her."

"Lascelles would excuse himself from saving a drowning man on the Frenchman's plea, 'Never been introduced,'" laughed Trevelyan.

"Why was she gone so white?" asked Pop, still intent on one subject.

"The smoke was on her chest. In another minute or two she'd have been suffocated."

"Didn't she look charming asleep?"

"My dear boy, I can't go in for all your ecstasies. I never get the steam up so strong—it wastes coals for nothing. With you, I like the look of her, but she owes much more to expression than features. Lascelles here would adore her father. When I woke him up, he only said, 'A fire? How annoying! If you would wake Miss Luard, I will rise and dress. I am sorry to give you so much trouble.' He's a very courteous old fellow, but decidedly of Lascelles's quiescent school, wrapping his dressing-gown round him, and letting others go to the devil as they please. Well, I think I'll go and wash my hands. May I use your room, Oakes? Won't you come, Pop? You look uncommonly like an

energetic chimney-sweep done in sepia. Temple should take us all just as we are now, Lascelles representing the only clean and philosophic man among us, who refused to scorch his fingers at other people's fires."

Trevelyan and I washed and redressed ourselves, and went to dine with Mr. Luard, the only man probably who thought of a dinner-party at Chamounix that day.

We found them in one of the long, low rooms, with such delicacies as Luard's gourmet foresight had induced him to bring to Chamounix, and Miss Florestine standing in the window, very daintily got up for a young lady out touring. She was not beautiful, or anything of that, but she had a thorough-bred look about her, and something brilliant and *séduisant* in her manners and appearance; there was a radiance in her eyes, a smile on her mignonne mouth, and an intellectuality in her face that made her very attractive, after the three classes of bread-and-butter misses, artificial coquettes, and domestic drudges, into which women seem divided. She was the youngest of the family; her sisters were married, and her father, who had not much money, and spent what he had on himself, lived here and there—six months in Rome, nine in Paris, three in Baden, and so on—as the fancy took him. He was kind to his daughter, but cared no more for her than the chamois on the hills, being an agreeable *laissez-aller*, profoundly selfish old gentleman, with his affections centred on Steinberg, écarté, and himself.

"Will you have a game, Mr. Temple?" said he, after our impromptu dinner. "I always bring a couple of packs with me into these out-of-the-world places, so that if I meet with any rational man, we can have a little quiet play."

A little quiet play we did have, at a couple of Naps. a

side, while Trevelyan and Florestine chatted and laughed, agreed and disputed, as they had done greatly, it seemed, to their own delectation throughout dinner.

“Look at these dear little Alp roses,” said Florestine, showing him some flowers, “and these pretty clochettes; I’m so fond of that name, I always fancy they are the fairies’ marriage bells. Don’t you? How much of life’s best poetry people lose who never stop in their hurry-scurry through the world to look at such wayside beauties as these.”

Trevelyan smiled. “Look at the other side of the picture; think what a deal of land is wasted by your idolised mountains. If the Arve were turning water-wheels, and the Eau Noire feeding machinery, and factory chimneys rearing their heads among the pines, and the Savoyards prosaic and clean, instead of picturesque and poverty-stricken——”

“Oh, taisez-vous!” cried Florestine, horrified. “You are talking like those dreadful utilitarians, who would take a rainbow if they could get at it to cut into ribbons; look at the grandest old forest only with a view to timber; gather a darling crocus only with a view to veratrine; and see in the fairest spray of seaweed only so many atoms of iodine.”

“But if you had a goitred throat, which Heaven forbid, you would be very glad of iodine,” laughed Royston, highly amused with her impetuosity. “If your papa has the gout, you’ll find it fortunate that the crocus grows for something besides looking pretty; and, as to timber—though you may find it very romantic—I fancy you would be the first to be uncomfortable in a wigwam or a warry, and would soon ask us for a good sound house of unromantic Norwegian timber.”

“But I am so fond of pretty things,” said Florestine,

plaintively; and your utilitarians would take them all away. Of what use, in a business point of view, is a Raphael 'Madonna,' a 'Greek slave,' a Beethoven sonata? yet a thing of beauty is a thing of joy forever, and the world would be a hopelessly dreary desert without them."

"But where would be your Madonna, and statue, and sonata without those very practical things to start them—pigments and canvas for the painting; clay and chisel for the statuary; wood and iron, and coarse workmen's hands, to produce the music? You cannot get your things of beauty without some very prosaic aid."

"Well, perhaps not; only, if all the roads are macadamised, we shall have no delicious bridle-paths, with hawthorns and violet banks, and the world will be like one giant military map. Make the straight Roman road of life for commercial travellers, but leave a few forest lanes for artists, and anglers, and poets——"

"And enthusiasts."

She looked up, laughing. "Oh, yes; I am an enthusiast. So are you, I dare say, though you wouldn't acknowledge it!"

"I?" cried Trevelyan; "the last man in the world. I have seen everything too closely to have any glamour left about any subject. One pays too dear for that sort of indulgence not to soon try and lose the habit."

"But I would rather pay for a thing than not enjoy it," said epicurean Florestine. "I remember, when I was a child, having some strawberries given me, and, like a prudent child, was going to save the large ones for the last, but papa recommended me to take the best the first, for fear an earthquake might come and I should never finish my plateful. The argument struck me, and I acted on it; so I do now enjoy the present, *advienne que pourra!*"

"I don't agree with you," laughed Trevelyan. "I would make my strawberries into jam, and enjoy them all the year round."

"Possibly, but then if they turned bad and fermented?"

"They wouldn't ferment if they were properly made."

"But, perhaps, just as you were going to eat your jam your teeth might decay, and sweet things be *défendues*, and then how you would wish you had eaten your strawberries while you could enjoy them."

"I shall never have any strawberries to enjoy," smiled Trevelyan, "so I shall not have the option."

"Not? Why?" asked Florestine, quickly.

"Because the goods the gods give only go where there's money enough to buy them. Happiness, you know, Miss Luard, may stay with you as long as you have a check-book, but if you over-draw your balance, happiness goes out of the window."

"Yet," persisted Florestine, "it was a shrewd man of the world—a man who, like you, had seen all there was to be seen, and done all there was to be done—who wrote, 'Better one handful with quietness than two handfuls with travail and vexation of spirit.'"

He laughed. "Solomon was no judge. He had everything he wanted. Lying on rose-leaves, it is very easy to recommend others straw and philosophy."

"But do you think Solomon's life was all rose-leaves?"

"I'm sure I can't say. When I know so little the real opinions and feelings of men whom I see daily, and walk arm-in-arm with, I should be very sorry to judge of an individual who dates back thousands of years."

"But judging him by yourself? Human nature is alike all over the world; the same identical thing, whether it has a Roman toga over it or an English dress-

coat; whether it's dyed with woad or wrapped in seal-skin."

"Well, judging him by myself," laughed Trevelyan, "I should say he saw plenty of life, and got rather sick of what he did see; that he was very much like Rochefoucauld, and, judging in courts and camps, love and war, found a good deal to satirise, and very little to respect; few actions to bear scrutiny, and no motives unmixed; and, like a sensible fellow, did not let his knowledge of the trick of the kaleidoscope spoil his pleasure in its pictures, but knowing how to manage the little bits of glass and burnt cork that others took for jewels, shook them up for his own amusement, and smiled at the way he bamboozled them."

"You are keen-sighted," said Florestine, looking earnestly at him. "I am glad of that, for I would rather be judged by Machiavelli than Moses Primrose; the profound reader of character knows the true from the affected, as an analytical chemist can tell you real ore at a glance. But I am not sure but what you are too skeptical."

"Too skeptical? I don't think that is possible; as Emerson says; 'Who shall forbid a wise skepticism, seeing that on no subject can anything like even an approximate solution be formed?' "

"On no subject; very true. All subjects are open to discussion, and the belief of one man is as worthy a hearing as another's. There is nothing so likely to bring Truth out of her well as to hear above ground the struggle of the gladiators in the arena of argument. But there is such a thing as being too skeptical in your judgment of people, both for your own peace and their desert."

"*L'on triche et l'on est triché,*" smiled Trevelyan.

"In a world where, from the popular preacher who makes a clap-trap of his morality, to the beggar who smears himself with mercurial ointment to excite compassion—from the cabinet minister who prates of "The People" and only manoeuvres for his party, to the London tradesmen who pay those employés the highest who cheat with the best sleight of hand—trickery goes on wheel within wheel from morning to night. I think the best way to get peace for oneself is to grow so used to the chicory that one doesn't relish pure coffee; and the greatest right one can accord to one's neighbor is to let him cheat on unmolested."

"But you do not join him in doing it?"

"Perhaps my talent does not lie that way, else I might be tempted. If I had had the tact to chime in with falsehoods, to flatter folly, to agree where I disagreed, to say 'Quite right, my dear sir,' to old Hahneman's theory of physic, and sigh, 'Quite true, my dear madam,' at my patient's Dorcas meetings, go with the tide, and oil my tongue, and suppress my opinions, I might now be in Saville Row making my 2000*l.* a year, driving my brougham, and drinking my claret——"

"I would rather—I would ten times rather," burst in Florestine, vehemently, "make 500*l.*, take a hansom occasionally, drink A. K., and speak the truth."

"I have thought so," smiled Trevelyan; "or, at least, as I say, my talent didn't lie the other way."

She looked up in his face and laughed. "You are steel, then why will you not allow anybody else to be so?"

"Perhaps I may; if I fight some time with them and they don't break."

Florestine shook her head impatiently.

"Who would feel complimented by that? You should know a good sword when you look at one."

"No," persisted Trevelyan, "because I might be misled by a little gilt chasing on it, and find it as brittle as glass; but if I bend it across my knee, there can't be a mistake."

"If you put it to such a test, you deserve to have it fly out of your hands."

"But if it were a good one, it would come back again, as Excalibur rose from the water."

"But Excalibur sank at last, monsieur."

"Florestine!" said Mr. Luard, "you are talking Mr. Trevelyan deaf. Make me some more sherbet, please. Nice inventions, those gazogenes, are they not, Mr. Temple?"

They might be nice inventions; but I dare say Royston wished gazogene and all the old gentleman alike at the devil.

III.

OUR LITTLE QUEEN FORMS HER HOUSEHOLD.

"I say, Royston," said Pop the next morning, "you say they're going to Martigny to-day—why shouldn't we go too? I'm sick to death of this place—eh?"

The arrangement seemed not such a bad one as were most offsprings of Pop's brain, and go to Martigny we did. As the Luards' calèche set off we followed on our mules, and introduced Lascelles and Oakes to Miss Florestine and her father, who, loving society, rejoiced in the rencontre, and possibly having an eye to business, thought it not a bad thing to join in with five men, one of whom had a prospective coronet. A queer little fig-

ure the prospective coronet looked, perched on the extreme end of his mule, after the habit of eastermongers, and habited in a little monkey-jacket and straw hat, with his calcined whiskers under it; and I could not wonder Florestine found Royston, who went round the ledges to get her flowers as if he were a guide born, and would have looked high-bred if you had dressed him like a peasant, the more attractive of the two. We had a pleasant journey into Martigny that day—so pleasant, that when we were all sitting under the trees among the roses at the Hôtel de la Tour (with, by the way, the only nice-looking young woman I had seen about here waiting on us,) we agreed, over our strawberries and cream, Luard proposing, and Pop violently seconding, that we should all go on together to Interlachen, doing the thing leisurely, anybody free to desert the company and go off by himself whenever he chose.

“Then I am the queen of the party,” cried Florestine. “I shall expect you all to do exactly what I tell you. Let me see. Papa shall be commissary-general and caterer for the forces, and Mr. Temple shall be photographer to her majesty, but bound over not to take her, as all his likenesses look very much like wooden dolls staring fiercely through a cloud of brown smoke.”

“And what am I?” cried Pop.

“Master of the horse—I mean the mules; and woe be to you if mine does not go well.”

“And I?” asked Oakes.

“Artist and cornet-player; bound to give all your sketches to the queen, and to play on Lake Lemman whenever we come to it.”

“Don’t make me anything, Miss Luard, but your equerry in waiting,” said Lascelles. “I’d die to serve you, but I won’t stir a step for anybody else.”

"You shall have nothing at all to do, Mr. Lascelles," rejoined Florestine; "for you take so much care of yourself that I am sure you have no time to spare."

"And what's Royston to be?" said I, when the laugh at Lascelles's expense, in which he, like a wise man, joined, was over.

"Perhaps he doesn't care to join the household?" she said, with a quick glance at him.

He smiled at the pique of her tone.

"I think I had better be guide in general, if Miss Luard is not to kill herself down a crevasse, as she was nearly doing the other morning."

"Well! I wanted to see what was below—woman's curiosity, you know. You shall be guide, and you shall be prime minister, too, and naturalist, and conversationalist, and——"

"Stop, stop!" cried Trevelyan. "You'll give me too much to do. I've heard that queens are apt to grow exigeantes."

"Shall we all take a vow," began Lascelles, "like the Hungarian '*Moriamur pro rege nostro*'?"

"'*Rege*' is king, and '*regina*' is queen. Come, I know Latin better than that," said poor little Pop.

"If you know Latin so well, it's a pity you don't know history better," sneered Lascelles.

"If Pop's neglected his head, he's cultivated his heart, any way; you've done just the reverse, Lascelles," said Royston, sharply. "I dare say the Chamounists gave him the preference when he was singeing his whiskers to help them, and you were (very philosophically, I admit) looking on, with your cigar in your mouth."

"Heart! my dear fellow," fawned Lascelles; "didn't know you went in for that line—thought you called it all bosh."

"I call the pretence of it bosh, as I call the assumption of superiority conceit."

Lascelles gave him a glance with his eyes as if he would have liked to pay him for it; but it was not very easy to shut Royston up, either by words or blows—he was too good a holder of the belt in both matches.

Those were jolly days we spent touring about there. Royston and I had enjoyed ourselves when we had done the "grand" some dozen years before, during the "Long;" but, on my life, I think we enjoyed this a good deal more, especially as we sent Murray to the deuce, and loitered *en route* as we chose. Luard was a capital companion, a *bon viveur*, full of laughable stories, and our Queen ruled her subjects so merrily, was so lenient to tobacco, and so full of fun, that she might have been a young Cantab or cornet for any young-ladyish trouble that she caused us. She was clever, witty, and always a lady (I cannot endure your brusque women who talk slang, and fancy a bad imitation of us the likeliest way to attract us,) graceful and kittenish to those she liked, haughty and satirical on occasion to those she did not. Pop went mad about her—a regular case of raving madness, after two days—to Royston's infinite amusement. Lascelles flattered her softly (when he was not cut short,) and ceased speaking sneeringly of her behind her back. Oakes only resisted her because her hair was not the correct pre-Raphaelite red hue; and Trevelyan laughed at and with her, went after her constantly, took care of her, argued with her, took her to task, just as he pleased, and as nobody else did, or, perhaps, would have been allowed to do. Yes, we spent jolly days, going through the snow up to Mont St. Bernard, where Florestine played on the Augustine's piano, and left the unlucky young fellow all the drearier for his glimpse of her; row-

ing along Lake Lemman in romantic style enough, while Trevelyan pulled as became a man who had been stroke of the Cambridge Eight, and Oakes played his cornet, and Pop imperilled all our lives by balancing over to gather lilies off the castle walls of Chillon as we pulled under them; turning out to see the sunrise on the Righi, in company with other deluded victims to that confounded Alpine horn, where, I confess, I forgot to look at the sun, I was so occupied in noticing the variety of toilettes exhibited by those sleepy, shivering, grumbling, night-capped English ladies, and wishing that the sun was up and I could photograph them there and then. Yes, they were jolly days, though they seemed uncommonly pastoral and innocent after our usual garçon life; but perhaps we enjoyed them all the more for the contrast, and I know none of us seemed in a hurry to break up the party first begun at the Chamounix fire.

By gentle degrees we got up into the Oberland, and stopped at Interlachen—dear Interlachen, with its grey ruins and its walnut-trees. Whether it was that I read “Hyperion” there when I was in much the same state, as Paul Fleming (by the way, *my* Mary Ashburton married a horrid creature on ’Change, worth no end; I called on her the other day, and congratulated myself, for she must certainly weigh ten stone, and is grown decidedly vulgar), whether that really beautiful story has got inseparably mixed up in my mind with Interlachen, or why, I do not know, but I am fond of Interlachen, very fond of it, and sedulously did I photograph it, with a zeal worthy a better cause, till I had every nook and corner of it down in negatives and positives, and the amount of collodion spent on it was enough to fill the Lake of Thun.

“Don’t show them to me; they are nothing but nature smoke-dried,” said Florestine one morning when we were

sitting on the turf near the Staubbach, and I had managed to catch the Unspunnen beautifully—most beautifully, I protest.

“Nature done brown, in fact,” added Trevelyan, who was lying on the grass reading the “Méditations” to her. “Look at your wristbands, Temple. Well, for a dirty occupation, commend to amateur photographing; it beats chimney-sweeping hollow, and brickmaking is cleanliness itself to it.”

“Well, see if I don’t photograph something you’d give all you possess to have,” said I.

“I’ll bet you a guinea you never take any sketch that I wouldn’t throw into the Aar,” replied Royston, with a contemptuous kick at my entire apparatus.

“Done! Look out for your money.”

That day, after we had driven back to our hotel, I spied Florestine standing under the walnut-trees feeding a magpie she had found to patronise, holding her hat in her hand, and with her head half turned to speak to Trevelyan and her father, who were smoking in the garden. In a second my stand was up, my camera fixed. She stood still in the same position. Down went the slide, and Florestine was photographed. I crept away as quietly as a thief, carried my proof to my own room, put it through all the varied phases of a photograph’s existence, stippled them with great care, and after three or four days’ secret work, was rewarded by the possession of a couple of colored photographs that Pop would have sold his title for, Oakes given his best engraving of the Huguenot, and supercilious Lascelles warmed into gratitude to obtain, and which I do not think Trevelyan, though he *did* despise the art, would have thrown without a look into the Aar.

“What are you reading there, Pop?” said Trevelyan

one morning, finding the boy lying on the grass poring over a book whose perusal seemed to heat him more than a match with the Lord's men or the Harrow Eleven.

"'Hyperion,'" groaned poor Pop. "I'll be shot if I can make rhyme or reason of it; but she liked it, and so I thought——"

"She! Who? Give people their proper names," said Royston, rather sharply.

"Florestine—Miss Luard. By George! Trevelyan," cried Pop, springing to his feet, with his honest, ugly little face glowing crimson, "I tell you what: I could die for that girl!"

"Die? Pooh!" said Trevelyan, in his sarcastic, dry tone—a tone he seldom used to Pop—"sensible men don't do those things, though sometimes, I dare say, dying for a woman would be a lesser evil than living with her."

"But, by George! I would," went on Pop, vehemently. "I don't know how it is, but I'd do anything for her. I feel as if she were some star right above me that I could never help looking at. I vow, if her dress sweeps against me, I feel happier than——"

"For Heaven's sake, don't talk such folly," broke in Trevelyan, impatiently. "You were just as bad about that flaunting, flirting, Mitchell girl at Baden, and little Babette in the Palais Royal, and that hideous confectioner woman at Windsor. I can't say I think Miss Luard would much like being classed with them, nor do I consider that you have any right to——"

"But, Trevelyan," persisted Pop, "wait a bit. I can't help it. I would if I could, Heaven knows, for I'm the most miserable dog going, and I'd throw myself into that river with the greatest pleasure in life. I don't class her with them, I tell you. I worship her, I admire her, just

as those old chaps (the Greeks, wasn't it?) worshipped the sun. I tell you, if she only looks at me I feel in heaven; and yet when I'm with her I feel such a confounded fool. She's so clever, you know, and all that, and I can't keep up with her as you can; but, by Jove——"

"My dear Pop," said Trevelyan, his haughty, delicate lips curling contemptuously, "if you want to keep up with her, as you term it, you must accustom yourself to more elegant language. A high-bred lady doesn't admire being raved about by a raw boy in the terms he uses to a grisette or a fleuriste."

"An honest love's no insult to any woman," rejoined Pop, hotly. "I know she's miles above me, and I wouldn't annoy her or offend her for a kingdom, but I'd slave all my life if I thought I could make her like me; and I'm sure she'd grace the confounded title that the governor's always kicking up such a dust about better than any girl in the peerage."

Trevelyan's eyes flashed more scornful fire than was needful.

"Tell her so."

Pop winced under the tone.

"Oh, by George! I daren't though; and, besides, there's that stuck-up fellow Lascelles hanging after her, and he makes such game of one that I'm as chicken-hearted as a girl. But, I say, Trevelyan, don't you think she'd make a delicious little Countess if she only would——"

But Trevelyan had walked away, and was smoking some ten paces off; so Pop repressed his confidences, and returned to perplex himself with the story of the Fountain of Oblivion, which was, somehow, entangled in his mind with those luckless butts for wit, *les eaux* in Trafalgar Square.

That same story Trevelyan read one very rainy afternoon to Florestine while she finished up some sketches, and her father slept over a volume of Le Brun, and little Pop sat in the shadow making flies, but gazing furtively at the mischievous queen of our household.

"I love 'Hyperion, ' " said she, as he closed the book; "it is so true to life."

"In making Mary Ashburton do all the damage she could, and never be sorry for it?" said Royston. "Yes, I agree with you, that is very true to life—woman life, at least."

"No, you skeptic, I did not mean that; I meant in touching the chords of human nature which are unheard in the bustle of life, as the sweet tenor note is apt to be lost in the din and crash of an oratorio."

"A very pretty simile, but I am afraid you will find that the notes most people like best to play are a fanfaronade on their own merits, and all the sonates pathétiques and tender love-songs are done on a selfish principle, as the poor French hussar plays his horn at the Lurley echo to bring him so many sous. The horn and the echo sound very poetic, I dare say, to young ladies, but they have a prosaic side to them, and if you give no money you get no music. In the same way men trot out their feelings, and loves, and sorrows, to draw admiration or excite a lucrative pity, as a clergyman, if he lose his wife, gets up in his pulpit with a new cambric handkerchief, and weeps over his text to make the ladies vote him an angel, and agree his departed wasn't half worthy of him."

"You make me laugh, but you make me angry," said Florestine, playing an impatient tattoo on her palate. "When you talk in that way, who would think you the same man who related with so much enthusiasm at

Vevay, the other day, poor Bonnevard's heroic 'El Geneve?' "

"Well, I've a liking for Bonnevard," smiled Trevelyan; "but that comes from reading Byron when I was a boy, and as for his El Geneve, I can't tell whether that wasn't a bit of clap-trap or a make-up of the Swiss."

"You are incorrigible. Pray, why did you save my life at Chamounix—from selfishness?"

"Yes, First, because I wanted some exertion; secondly, because I should have been badly handled in England if I had let a woman die unaided; thirdly, because I knew I should buy a reputation for chivalry very cheap."

She laughed; but she was half excited. "What have you had to annoy you? Your sauce piquante has more amari aliquid than general, to-day."

"Nothing. What should make you fancy so? I am not a disappointed, soured man, swearing at society that has not appreciated him; au contraire, people are ordinarily very well bred to my face, whatever they may say behind my back; I have done what I liked all my life long, and if my position is not secured now, it is my own fault for preferring liberty and nothing a year to hard practice and a thousand or two; but if you expect me to see miracles of deep feeling and self-abnegation in the people I meet about in the world, I have been too much in its highways and byways, and seen too long behind its scenes, to be able to oblige you. I have seen too many of the strings of the marionettes to believe in their little farces and melodramas. A medical man is let perforce behind the scenes where another profession never penetrates. When death stalks in, truth sneaks out, though I have seen woman paint, and act, and attitudinise to their graves."

"No doubt," answered Florestine. "I do not wonder at your skepticism; it is an armor which the world buckles on in time, alike to Launcelot and Britomart, if they go where the battle rages. You have been taught it; '*solæ fides sufficit*' does for boys who know nothing of life, and there is hardly enough worthy of faith to make it possible to keep the commodity long. Only, since you see so much false coin, I think you should be able to know the real."

"How? The false coin is equally milled at the edges and by the self-same die? I have been both at the mint and the coining-shops, and there is no exterior difference between the two. I have seen girls of fifteen playing the rôles of the most thorough-paced intrigantes; I have seen gentle, merry little kittens, with the avarice and cunning of a Harpagon; and meek, yea-nay, dévotés women, as thoroughly bad under the rose as the worst Laïs or Leda. I have seen invalids in their death-hour revive to put on their rouge; I have seen tigers' claws under pattes de velours; and wives (ladies, mind you) pawning their husbands' diamond studs to buy some new finery of their own. There is as much acting and as much corruption in respectable private houses (in another way) as in the poor scapegoats of coulisses, ginguettes, and Quartiers Breda. While we're alive they get what they can out of us, and when we're dead, wives and sisters begin to wonder whether crape is becoming, how many flounces are necessary, perplex themselves over the design of the mourning brooch, so as to turn the casualty to account, and read over that delightful advertisement we laughed at the other day: 'During seasons of bereavement, when the mind is least fitted to attend to the cares of dress, which are nevertheless of paramount importance in a social point of view, it is desirable to know that at

Messrs. Sables' establishment mourning of every kind is kept, and may be had ready-made with the greatest possible expedition for widows and families.' That is beautiful, I think; and yet you ask me to see in these people living models of sincerity, fidelity, candor, and devotion!"

"Not in those people," said Florestine, pettishly; "but I expect of you, as a keen-sighted man of the world, to be able to distinguish enthusiasm from effervescence, real feeling from sentiment, candor from forwardness, and truth from falsehood; and I do think that you would be equally blind and heartless if you set your heel on and crush the true diamonds with the same merciless carelessness as you have always trampled down the tinsel and the paste."

Trevelyan smiled; then got up, and said he must smoke a pipe out of doors and consider her arguments.

He remembered it wasn't the wisest thing in the world for a man of thirty-four to risk imbibing the folly of a boy of eighteen. Florestine was certainly a dear little thing, but it had long been his maxim that no man should make love on less than two thousand a year. So Royston lit his pipe, and went out for a walk by himself.

IV.

MY PHOTOGRAPHS RAISE A WHIRLWIND.

FLORESTINE—Regina, as she called herself—was sitting under the walnut-trees in one of the green meadows by the Aar, sketching, with her court round her smoking, chatting, and laughing, vying with each other to amuse

her, except Trevelyan, who amused her always without effort, as he did everybody whom he talked to with that sweet silvery voice of his, when my unlucky photographs came on the *tapis* again.

"Well, old fellow," said Trevelyan, "when am I to pay you my guinea? When I do, I'd certainly advise you to lay it out in shirts, for the quantity of linen you iron-mould must have cost a small fortune."

"Thank you. I've been trying a new line lately. Would you like to see it?"

"Decidedly, if you'll have the kindness to write under each, as children do, 'This is a house,' 'This is a tree,' that we may be sure to use the right words of admiration."

"Let her majesty be merciful, then," said I, as I knelt on one knee, and offered the young lady her own likenesses.

"Oh! Mr. Temple, what a shame!" cried Florestine. "You are guilty of *lèse-majesté*, of high treason of the blackest dye! When I bound you over never to take a portrait of me, to go and do it slyly like this! There is no punishment too great for you. I see you have not left me the usual hideous brown, and am bound to confess you have finished them as nicely as Mayall could; but for all that it is unpardonable, isn't it papa, when I always solemnly vowed never to be photographed?"

"Your majesty must forgive me. You heard my bet laid on the subject."

Florestine colored, and Royston gave me an admonitory kick, and studied the portrait silently. Two pretty pictures they were, the image of our little queen, and, for the first time in our tour, my camera got praised for its work. Mr. Luard was pleased with them; Pop gazed in an ecstasy; Lascelles looked approvingly through his eye-

glass; and Oakes admired them as much as ever he did one of Millais's red-haired, large-limbed, hideous, impossible women. And Trevelyan—well, Trevelyan said nothing, but when he found himself alone with Florestine, standing by the open window in the soft, warm twilight, with nobody to notice him but the stars coming out over the pure white Jungfrau and her knights, the Eiger and Silver Horn, keeping guard over her in their glistening armor of ice, Trevelyan bent down over her, and said—very softly, too—

“Popham and Lascelles asked in vain. Shall I, too, be refused if I humbly beg for one of those photographs of our queen?”

“Will you care for it?” began Florestine, with eager joy. Then stopped with a flush on her cheeks, and put one of them into his hand in silence.

He slipped it into the breast of his waistcoat with a simple “thank you.” He did not trust himself to say more, for his heart beat quick at the touch of her hand, and he felt Pop's madness fastening on him.

“Pop is fond of talking of dying for you,” he said, at last. “I fancy you would value more a man who did not sentimentalise upon it, but lived for you resolutely and entirely. Tell me which you would prefer: every day liking the ‘love’ of the world, with money and servants at your command, titles and estates in plenty, a luxurious life, and a high position, or a passion of which you would know yourself the last and sole object, a hand and a head that might never get you riches, though they would work untiringly for you, an intellectual but not a wealthy life. Which would you choose?”

“Oh, why do you ask? The one would distract me, millions could not make up for the curse of a cold love; the other would be my ideal, my glory. The first would

stifle me under its wearisome grandeur; the last, come what deprivation, or effort or toil there might, would be the heaven of my dreams, and so loved, so allowed to share alike difficulty and joy, I could ask no higher destiny."

She spoke impassionedly and earnestly, the moonlight showing him her flushed face and quivering lips. Trevelyan's pulse beat quicker, involuntarily he drew nearer to her, not master of himself. What little things make or mar our fates! At that minute Luard, walking outside, came up to the window.

"Trevelyan, what was the price of that Venetian meerschauum of yours?"

"My guinea, please, old fellow," said I, as Trevelyan walked up and down, having a last smoke, "unless you go and ask for one of my photographs, and let me see you throw it into the Aar."

He looked as sharp as if I knew one of the identical pictures was then buttoned under his waistcoat—which, of course I did not at the time—and tossed me my bet in silence, with a smile of pleasure on his face, nevertheless.

"So, our household breaks up the day after to-morrow," I continued. "Doesn't Luard go to Brussels?"

"I believe so."

"And I suppose you go on the original route up to Vienna—ch?"

He smoked silently for a minute or two.

"What do you think of going on with them a little farther? Pop wants to lengthen out his leave, and winter is the time for Vienna and the bal masqués."

"Comme vous voudrez. Queen Florenstine will have no objection, I dare say, to keeping her court round her—by the way, her sceptre must have some spell in it to

keep five men dawdling away ten weeks in the Oberland without being bored to death. Don't you think so? But I say, Royston, do you take care your young cub don't compromise himself. Freshlacquers wouldn't much admire to see his heir apparent go home married and done for, would he?"

"Do you suppose she'd be likely to condescend to that raw young idiot?" said Trevelyan, with supreme scorn.

"Can't say. Women, according to your doctrine, would condescend to something infinitely worse to get a title. However, I dare say she wouldn't try it on, there are three years before he comes of age, and boys never keep in the same mind two months together. Lascelles is the better parti; and I fancy, for all his superciliousness, he's fairly caught this time."

A smile came over Royston's face, as if he didn't think either Pop or Lascelles stood much chance to win, but he cut me short haughtily enough.

"I don't see that either you or I have any possible right to discuss other people's affairs. I think ill of most women—I have had cause—but one has certainly no business to decide that a girl in whom one finds neither artifice nor affectation would either manœuvre for a coronet, or marry for marrying's sake."

"Then you have fought with your sword, and found it true steel?"

"Perhaps so," he said briefly, as he turned round and resumed his walk. "I tried the spoon-bait in the river to-day, but the trout are not here what they are at Geneva. Hallo! What the deuce is the matter with Pop?"

The cause of his exclamation was walking towards us with much the same dogged vehemence as a bull that means mischief, with his hat pulled over his eyes, and his pipe stuck in his teeth, but no smoke coming out of its

bowl. He never saw us till Trevelyan caught him by the arm.

"Walking for a wager, Pop?"

Pop shook him off savagely.

"Let me alone, can't you?"

"No," said Trevelyan, quietly slipping his arm in his; "not till you tell me what's the cause of your tramping about here all alone in the moonlight. Solitude isn't your line generally. Ain't you well, old fellow?"

"Well enough," growled Pop, "but the biggest fool that ever walked."

"No news," laughed Trevelyan, with his kind, sunny smile. "What's the last bit of folly, my boy? Compromised yourself with the landlady?—promised to marry that pretty little Gretchen?—overdrawn your balance at Berne—or what is it?"

"Don't make game of me," broke out little Pop, fiercely. "I won't stand it I tell you. I may be a raw cub, and can't please her as you can, but I can feel as well as you, and I'll be shot if I stand your chaff. I knew what she'd say to me, but I was cursed idiot enough to go and tell her I couldn't leave her without——"

Here Pop broke down and bit the end of his short clay ferociously, his comical little face very pale and sad, as he pulled his hat farther down over his eyes.

Trevelyan's own eyes grew soft and veloutés as he looked at him. The man of strong and matured passions knew how quickly the awkward and wayward fancy of the boy would fade away, but he also knew by remembrance that it would not die without struggle and pain, however ephemeral it might be. He put his arm over the boy's shoulder with caressing gentleness.

"Poor fellow, you have the heart of a gentleman, Pop; some day a woman will learn to value it aright."

"Don't, Trevelyan, don't," stammered Pop, his lips quivering. "I shall be better by-and-by, but it cuts hard just at present. I never dreamt she'd listen to me, an ignorant, sheepish, good-for-nothing idiot that I am, but—but——Oh curse it, let me go!"

He wrenched himself away, afraid we might see the emotion, of which, in his incipient manhood, he felt so heartily ashamed, and strode along, biting his pipe-stem harder still.

As he left us, Lascelles and Oakes, taking a turn in the moonlight, as we were doing, joined us. Lascelles glanced after the boy's retreating figure with a smile and a sneer: "Poor little Pop; so he's been submitting himself to the indignity of a rejection. I'd have spared him it if I'd known what he meant to do."

"You!" repeated Trevelyan, with a glance expressing, "Why the devil have you any right to interfere?"

"Yes," said Lascelles, stroking his perfumed light whiskers with self-sufficient satisfaction; "when one's happy oneself one can afford to pity others."

"What an amiable frame of mind you are in, Lascelles," said Trevelyan. "something quite new. Has your eldest brother died? or the Consols gone up? or what is it?"

"No, Trevelyan; better luck even than that," said Oakes, who was a blunt, good-hearted fellow. "He's been and gone and outwitted us all! I vote we all call him out as the Frenchmen did that luckless editor in Paris, and leave him so riddled with bullets that Florestine will have nothing to say to him. Lascelles always boasts of his luck with the women, and now, I suppose, we shall have to believe him, for he's offered his blessed person, which we know he thinks an Apollo's, and his fifteen hundred a year, which we're sure is the real attraction, and all his fu-

ture chances of the Florentine consulate, to the papa of that dear, amusing, provoking, confounded little Regina, and, what's more, got 'em accepted. Don't you feel homicidal? I do; only I'm consoled by the reflection that marriage is such an awful risk and bother, and it's such an even-odd now-a-days that your wife runs away with your stable-boy, that I try to think I'm the best off."

"I caught sight of Trevelyan's face; it was deathly pale—pale as when a man is in a dead faint, and the veins on his forehead were standing out in painful distinctness, his lips pressed together into a straight line; except for that he stood quite calm and unmoved. Lascelles smiled with conscious vanity.

"Oakes has peached too soon. I don't wish it spoken about yet, but I think I may say I am pretty well sure to have to ask you all to be *garçons d'honneur* before long. It's a great sacrifice, marriage—a very great sacrifice, certainly; but what can a man do when a little fairy like this bewitches him?"

He went on, as he drew my other photograph out of his pocket, and looked at it in the moonlight, curling his whiskers with a look of extreme triumph and contentment to think the original had been promised to him.

Trevelyan's face grew as white as livid as if were cut in stone, and I wished my camera and collodion had been at the bottom of the Red Sea before they had been the means of torturing him thus. He smiled, however, and congratulated Lascelles with a self-possession and a chill gaiety that was worse to see than any grief. It passed counter with them, and Lascelles, looking up at the light in Florestine's bedroom window, hummed a bar of "Stars of the summer night," put his pipe out, and bid us a laughing good night..

The unnatural calm of Trevelyan struck a chill into

me; till then I had never thought he cared for the girl more than for the many other women he chatted and laughed with, and prescribed for. I spoke to him at last a few words—I hardly remember what; he turned on me fiercely, a fire of roused passions quivering over his face.

“For Heaven’s sake, let me alone, as the boy said; I do not want your pity.”

He went up the staircase without another word, and I heard the clang of his bedroom door echo into the calm night. Next morning, as it had been previously planned, we and the Luards were to part to meet again in Paris in two months: Luard and Trevelyan had agreed to do so one evening, on Florestine’s remarking how much she wanted to see Rachel in “Phèdre.” Now, I knew he would never go with her to the Français, never see her again if he could help it; but Florestine did not and could not guess it from Royston’s conversation at breakfast, which was more brilliant and pungent than ever—the phosphorus that sparkles over the wreck lying below. He addressed her father chiefly, who was planning which hotel they should go to in Baden, with all the other trivialities that become paramount to a tourist, and did most of the talking himself. Somehow, that breakfast was miserably triste, though Royston was as brilliant, and Luard as egotistical, as ever, and Lacelles in the highest possible spirits. But, without counting all the under-currents, there is something detestable in the last of anything—the last day, the last look, the last meeting (the last bill is the only last thing I was ever glad to say good-bye to)—and our breakfast as I say, was uncommonly glum; our radiant Regina had neither laughter, repartee, nor sunshine for us that morning.

The time came, the char-à-banc was at the door (Pop was locked up in his own bed-chamber, sobbing his heart

out amidst the débris of valises, carpet-bags, shepherd plaids, wide-awakes, cigar-cases, and pocket-pistols, as pitiful a picture of woe as Ajax among the slaughtered herds,) Trevelyan went up to our little Queen, holding out his hand with a pleasant smile, for was not Lascelles there to see?

“Well, Miss Luard, good-by, and bon voyage! We have had a delightful three months’ tour, and I am sure I ought to thank you immensely for many amusing days. I hope we shall be always friends of happy reminiscence, as your favorite Tupper says.”

Florestine threw back her head with a haughty gesture; her face was deadly pale, and laughed with her teeth set together, as she said, coldly, “There is no obligation whatever; you will be equally amused elsewhere, and you contributed much more than I did to the general enjoyment. Adieu, et bon voyage also!”

Royston turned away from her to shake hands with her father—there was no sign of the lava burning under the ice, except the savage fierceness of one momentary glance at Lascelles—then he went up to his own room for a brandy-flask he had left there. The *char-à-banc* waited five minutes; he was not down, so I ran up-stairs to call him. His door stood half open; I saw him standing on the hearth, stamping into a thousand pieces—as if he would crush out with it all memory and all passion—Florestine’s photograph.

I went away without entering; in a few minutes he came out and down the dim, obscure staircase. As he tore down it, a woman’s figure came swiftly after him, and a voice, broken and breathless, cried “Wait! wait!” But he was mad for the time being, and, as men often do, thrust away from him in blind haste the very happiness he would have given his life to win.

In another minute we were driving away from Interlachen—Interlachen, so bright and fair, with the morning sunshine on its walnut-trees, and cloister towers, and silvery mountain ranges; contrast enough, in their peace and purity, to the fever in his blood and the tempest in his heart.

V.

SUNSHINE AFTER STORM.

Just that day twelvemonth I walked into Trevelyan's house in the West-End. After we left Interlachen we came straight home, I to begin that confounded Michaelmas term, Pop to try and drive away his luckless love in Badminton and Cafés Régence, oyster suppers, Star and Garter dinners, matches with All England, and such-like pastimes of youth. Trevelyan, too, put his name on the door, began practice, and worked vehemently at it, to try and forget, if he could, the curse that had clung to him ever since the Chamounix fire. His practice was more civil to him than he was to it, and Fortune favored him more than that *capricieuse* generally does any man who forgets to court her, for, neglectful as he had been of all his interests, when he came home, and set himself seriously to it for the first time in his life, his splendid talents began to tell, and ladies who had regretted "that dear Mr. Trevelyan, who was so delightful to talk to, and made one's cold quite a pleasant occurrence," when he left, welcomed his reappearance, and sent for him speedily.

But Trevelyan was sadly altered; true, his face was as handsome, his manner as graceful and gentle, his wit even finer and more sarcastic than ever, but *I* missed a ring in his laugh, a rapidity in his step, a joyousness in his smile; there was an absence of his old energy, a hardness in his satire, a chill over him altogether, which told me the seed sown in those merry days in the Oberland had brought forth thorns enough. Florestine was his strongest and his last love, and when men, my dear madam, run for that cup and miss the distance, they seldom care to enter themselves for any new plate.

Just twelve months, as I say, since the Chamounix fire, I went to see Trevelyan in the evening, about nine. He had just done dinner, and was sitting reading the *Westminster* with his pipe in his mouth, and his cockatoo vainly trying to attract his attention with futile cries of admiration at itself.

"Well, old fellow, how are you?" said he, looking up, while the bird screamed, "You here, you rascal!—you here?" at the top of his voice. "Have you dined? Why didn't you come in time for dinner at seven? I expect Pop in every minute; the young donkey has been backing Cornet for the Goodwood, lost a pot of money borrowed at eighty per cent., and is now in a row with his governor about it. I dare say he'll come to me all his life through to help him out of some scrape or other."

"Pop, Pop, Pop! where's Pop?" screamed the cockatoo. Just then the bell rang, the servant opened the door, and in came Pop, the same sturdy, snobbish, good-natured, red-whiskered boy who singed himself at Chamounix, and fell head and ears in love with Florestine Luard twelve months before. He sat with us an hour, talking, over coffee and pipes, of his governor, his difficulties, his new bay mare, his bet with Harry Villiers that

the Pet would pound Bully Broan, with similar interesting confidences from his private and public life, he having finally launched into the career of a man about town, which suited *him*, though I cannot say he graced *it*, being still somewhat raw, and not a little obtuse. At last he rose, reluctantly enough it appeared, for he was never happier than when with Trevelyan, whom he adored, as a Skye adores its master, saying he did not want to be bored, by going to a drum with his mother, which was his mission for that night. He fidgeted about for some minutes, rolling his pipe nervously round in his fingers, with a color in his cheeks rather derogatory to the should-be Charles Coldstreamism of his character as a fast man—a nil admirari-ism difficult, by the way, to attain when one is nineteen, and does not know the color of one's Bath bun is only chromate of lead.

He had evidently something on his mind, and with Pop to have a thing on his mind was to speak it. At last out it came:

“I say, Trevelyan, I saw her to-day.”

“I saw a quick electric flush pass over Royston's face; his lips parted, but he could not command his voice to speak. He looked up quickly with an involuntary start.

“I was coming up from Windsor, where I'd been breakfasting with a man in the Blues, and saw her get out of the train at Paddington. I don't know whom she was with,” went on Pop, confusedly—he had never guessed that his madness was shared—“and she didn't notice me; but when I saw her face, it seemed—it seemed——Confound it, it made me feel as spooney as ever! I'd thought I'd forgotten her, but she isn't the sort of stuff to be forgotten.”

And poor Pop broke down in his not over poetic expressions, and drummed on the table with a half-pitiful,

half-comical expression. Trevelyan sat still, stroking the bird's head absently.

"I tried to follow her, but I couldn't," Pop went on. "I missed their carriage. By Heaven! if I'd seen Lascelles with her, I think I should have struck him. I felt just such a fool about her as I did at Interlachen. I wish you'd try and find out whether that cursed fellow did marry her or not. You never heard anything of him, did you?"

"Never," I answered him; "but as he always lives abroad—in Florence, I believe, with that rich old uncle of his—'tisn't likely I should have done. I say, be off; it's ten o'clock; you will be too late to go with your revered mother."

Pop took his hat in silence, looking doleful beyond expression, nodded us a good night, and went out amidst Cocky's vehement assurances that he was a rascal. Trevelyan sat still in his arm-chair after he was gone, with the same iron rigidity on his face that it had worn the last night at Interlachen, every feature as set and white as if chiselled in marble.

I did not like to see him thus, so got up and laid my hand on his shoulder, saying, "Royston, dear old fellow, don't care for her."

"Would to Heaven I did not!" All the passion pent up in him for the past year burst its barriers in those few little words. He started up, and leaned his head in his arms on the mantelpiece. "I have tried hard," he muttered, "to forget her, in reckless pleasures, in untiring work, but I cannot. It is very strange. Other women I have left and forgotten, but she—nothing drives her from my mind. Night and day I am haunted by her memory, till I am well-nigh mad. I hoped I had found a woman truer than the rest. I had begun to believe in

her warm words, her ingenuous eyes, her winning ways, and then, good Heavens! to learn they were all so many lies—to know they were all equally given to another——”

He stopped, he shook like a girl, and pressed his forehead hard against the cold marble of the mantelpiece. At that moment the door-bell rang.

Trevelyan, as I say, was none of your would-be M.D.s, with bought testimonials, and practice as chimerical as their reputation. He kept to consultation, therefore, and was seldom disturbed in the evening. But just now the door opened, and his servant entered hurriedly with a message, to the effect that a gentleman in the next house had fallen down in an apoplectic fit. Would he mind going in immediately? He turned round with miraculous self-command, sent the servant back with a calm “I will come!” waited a moment, drank some brandy, took his hat, and, nodding to me, told me to wait till he came back, and went out, looking as worn and haggard as a man after a six weeks’ fever.

I did not wait till he came back, having an engagement to an oyster supper at Little Watt’s chambers, in King’s Bench-walk, and it was well I did not, for his own house never saw him again till eight the next morning. No. 14, next door, had been lately let to a new tenant, who had, it seems, only just taken possession of the tenement before apoplexy took possession of him. It was only a slight stroke, but sufficient to alarm his household. Trevelyan heard a few words from a housemaid as he took off his hat, ran up the stairs with his noiseless step, entered the room where the patient lay, and stood face to face with—Florestine Luard.

They stood for a moment looking at each other in silence, then she sprang towards him, *égarée*, either in surprise or joy. But in that minute Trevelyan had time

to ice into the impenetrability he was too fond of drawing round himself. Nobody could have guessed Florestine was any more to him than the commonest acquaintance as he bowed and took her hand with chill courtesy, spoke a few words of recognition, and inquired about her father's sudden attack. She answered him disconnectedly, and with something of his own formality (Royston, in that mood, genial and winning as he is in all others, is enough to freeze over a hot spring,) and turned to the old gentleman's bedside in silence.

There he stayed till dawn, watching him through the night, only exchanging the simplest common-places, or giving the briefest directions to Florestine. It was an odd meeting truly with the radiant queen of our Switzerland party, and in the stillness of the sick-room they passed the long hours together, she pale, silent, and spiritless, he barely addressing the woman he loved as often as he would have done an hospital nurse.

Towards morning his patient rallied, and Trevelyan rose. As he did so, the utter dejection of Florestine's attitude struck him. She was kneeling against the bed, still in her light evening dress, with her face leaning on the pillows; and as the lamp-light glittered on the emeralds of her bracelet, he noticed that the arm it clasped was a good deal thinner than it had been twelve months before. He could not stand still there and look tranquilly on at her. He went up to her, stern and chill, determined to keep down by sheer force all tenderness or trace of feeling.

"Miss Luard, can I have a word with you?"

She started and rose, following him silently into the next room.

"You need be under no further apprehension for your father," he began, speaking between his teeth; "I do not

perceive the slightest danger. I will send you a good nurse, as you desire, and will come in again early. If he awake, give him this draught."

"Thank you."

She did not trust herself to more; her voice sounded changed. She was tired, he thought. There was an awkward pause. Trevelyan employed himself in drawing up the blinds; the morning sun streamed in, and Florestine turned away from the light. Trevelyan lingered against his will, but he wanted certainty, even if the worst; he attempted conversation once more, but he failed signally, probably for the first time in his life. There was another silence; he played with the blind-tassel impatiently. Suddenly his eyes met hers, and Royston had no farther control over himself. Her face, in the full light of the dawn, unmanned him, and his strength went down as the Nazarene's before the witchery of the Philistine. He caught hold of her arm till his fingers crushed the fragile bracelet.

"Tell me the truth. Are you his wife?"

She looked up, startled at his fierce excitement.

"His wife! Whose wife?"

"Lascelles's—or any man's? Good Heaven! can you not answer me?"

He was crushing the bracelet closer in his anguish of suspense. She answered him with her old vehemence, wrenching her arm away from his grasp:

"I am no one's wife. *You* might know that. What right have you to portion me off to Lascelles, or to any one else? What right have you to class me with the low-bred intrigantes or fashionable manœuvrers who haggle for a wedding ring, and have taught you disgust for all our sex? What right have you to judge that I should marry for marrying's sake, take any man's name—

the first that offered—and give myself for mere position where you know my love would never go——”

And here Miss Florestine stopped in her impassioned harangue, and looked up in Trevelyan's face with passionate, loving, tearful, indignant eyes—eyes that no man skilled in face or character could doubt for long.

Trevelyan's haughty lips quivered; he sank upon a couch, leaning his head upon a table near—joy beat him down more even than sorrow. And little Regina—what did she do, mademoiselle? She did what I wish to Heaven you would do sometimes. She forgot dignity, and custom, and *convenance* (*i. e.* self, the grand principle, after all, of all the virtues you women plume yourselves upon so highly,) she forgot that he might not care two straws for her, or that she might compromise herself irremediably, she only remembered that she loved Trevelyan, and that she could not bear to part with him in anger; she knelt down by him and whispered like a little child sorry for a great fault, though, Heaven knows, the error lay on his side rather than on hers.

“Why are you angry with me? What have I done? You *know* I would never have married where I could never love.”

Royston did not let her finish her eloquence; he seized her hands and drew her close to him, kissed her lips and brow and hair, large tears glancing in his falcon eyes.

“Thank God! thank God! My little Queen, love me and forgive me.”

She did love him, and forgive him too, as all women worth being asked for their absolution always will any sin on the face of the earth, from the smashing of the entire Decalogue to so pardonable an error as Trevelyan's.

"You were very cruel," said Florestine, shaking her head gravely at him half an hour afterwards, "and very wicked to believe that an hour after you had asked *me* for my photograph I could have given the other to any one, much less to that vain idiot. Mr. Lascelles had spoken to papa that day, and papa encouraged him—he thinks as ill of his daughters, you know, as of all other women—and as Mr. Lascelles was in a very good position, and his villa at Florence very pretty, it never occurred to him that I should resist his proposals. Papa lent him the photograph, too, that evening, and as he never told me of it till the next day, I dare say, when he talked to you, he did consider himself accepted. But *you* should have known better; *you* should have been sure that, having once seen *you*, I could have never tolerated him, or any other."

Trevelyan smiled, and kissed her upraised face. It did his heart good to hear a woman speak fondly and fervently of her love for him, and not think it necessary to turn away and hide it like some unmentionable crime, with the overdrawn prudery to which, *entre nous*, the boldest women are often the most addicted. Nobody affected prudery more than Niñon de l'Enclos. Frankness and guileness have no rouge, and need no veil. Your enamelled cheeks cannot walk without one.

"Do you remember telling me at Chamounix," he asked her, "that my skepticism would destroy my own happiness, and refuse all justice to others?" Life taught it me perforce, and this past year has been punishment enough, Heaven knows. You will not visit it on me further, Florestine?"

She laughed her old mischievous laugh as she looked up into his eyes. "No, or I should punish myself too! But you should have known your sword was true steel

without passing it through so fiery a furnace. You never knew me tell a lie; you never, I know, saw in me any artifice or affectation; you had no right to condemn me on suspicion. I have seen enough of life to feel that skepticism is the wisest altitude of judgment, and what is called looking on the dark side of humanity is to look upon the real one. But still, to those who have always been true to us, we should be loyal in thought; and, oh! Royston dearest, where we love we should always have faith—faith in their better nature, that is only perhaps revealed, even though the world judged and found them guilty of any sin or weakness.”

This is 1860—five years since our Fire at Chamounix; but though I have washed my eyes with the strongest collyrium of skepticism on such points, I cannot with truth say that I find in Royston and Florestine any trace that the passion first lit from the ashes of the smoking hotel in the shadow of the Alps has grown one whit the cooler for time. They married, imprudently perhaps, for they were certainly a long way off Royston's old minimum; but they both preferred running the risk of fortune to the *peines fortes et dures* of a long engagement, as there was no granite obstacle to necessitate one. Luard gave her no money; he demonstrated to Trevelyan, who entirely agreed with him, that if he had given portions to each of his four daughters, he would have straitened himself to a degree no man could expect him to do. The pelicans may like plucking their breast-feathers, but I must say I, too, think it hard on a man to have to split up his income just because his children choose to marry. When we are in Kensal Green it is time enough for the young hawks to pick our bones;

we do not want to suffer and superintend the process alive. Trevelyan smoked two or three pipes over it, having a fight between prudence and passion. Happily he had a good deal of the last and very little of the first, and he was so restless and ill at ease without Florestine, that he thought he would try living with her, and, adopting her epicurean philosophy, caught hold of his present, and let his future take care of itself. He knew well enough she would have waited for him till doomsday, after the manner of that luckless Evangeline; but he was too much in love to fritter away her youth and his manhood in an indefinite probation, till he had a brougham and a butler, and the *soi-disant* "necessaries" of polite society. So they were married; the very worst thing for a man generally, but occasionally the best thing for him when he is Trevelyan's age, and has Trevelyan's madness on him, knows he shall not love again, and feels he shall work the better abroad for having rest and sunshine at home.

It has turned out well, for him at the least. I dined with them last night, and little Pop, too (Pop has subsided into an ardent friendship for his Interlachen love, who hears all his difficulties, and does more to polish him than all the rouge powder of his chill, stately home,) and we had more fun than if we had had a powdered flunkey behind each chair. I can assure you Trevelyan and Florestine have set themselves dead against the gourmet practice of coming for Johannisberg and turtle at nine, and leaving at twelve, as soon as the Johannisberg and turtle are disposed of; and their occasional evenings, which cost them little, and yet have such a strange charm for the most *difficile*, are more delightful in their *abandon*, intellectual discussion, and refined wit, than all the heavy and magnificent crushes at Freshlac-

quers's Eaton Square mansion. There *is* an element of society better than claret, after all, though, certainly, in most places where one goes, the claret is the only good thing. Five years have passed, and the five years have made Florestine a still more radiant Regina than in our touring days at Interlachen, and Trevelyan, dear old fellow, looking across the table at her last night, said, with a happy smile on his lips, which gave the lie to his words, that the worst thing that ever happened to him was WHEN ONE FIRE LIT ANOTHER, and he repaired THE MISCHIEF DONE BY MY PHOTOGRAPH.

THE MARQUIS'S TACTICS.

THE MARQUIS'S TACTICS.



I.

LORD GLEN'S PRELIMINARY SHOTS.

"MY dear Cyril, why don't you marry?" asked the Marquis of Glenallerton of his second son.

St. Albans, lying on his sofa in his rooms in the Mansion, smoking a hookah, and drinking hock and Seltzer, looked up, stared, and laughed.

"Why don't I marry? My dear governor, you shouldn't ask point blank questions like that. Please remember one's nerves. "Why don't I? Because, though Pascal says '*L'homme n'est ni bête ni ange*,' I think he is most irrevocably and undeniably *bête* when he assumes the matrimonial fetters?"

"Of course," responded the Marquis, familiarly known as Lord Glen. We all know that marriage is a social arrangement, and inconvenience, like the income-tax, and one conforms to it as such. I'm not asking you to go and fall in love, and crown a thousand follies with an irremediable one; God forbid! with all your absurdities you are too much a man of the world to make me fear that. I was merely thinking—— You're near thirty, ain't you?"

"Three-and-thirty, last January," responded St. Albans, with a profound sigh, as if it were the finale instead of the commencement of manhood.

"Very well. You have *mené la vie* to your heart's content; you have had *bonnes fortunes* in plenty; you are a most shockingly indolent dog; your debts are very heavy, you *will* bet—and on the most unlikely events, too—as if you were a millionaire like Crowndiamonds. I think, considering you are a younger son, and will get nothing more from me, that a good marriage, far from being a *bêtise*, would show greater wisdom than I should give you credit for after your tomfoolery at Wilverton—the idea of losing a borough that your family have had in their pocket for ages, for a pack of rubbish about, 'not bribing!' Bacon took bribes, however they try to smooth it over as 'fees,' and Walpole gave 'em. Do you set yourself above *them*, pray?"

"Certainly not; one was a lawyer, and had the devil to sharpen his wits; the other was a toper, and did very shrewd things in his cups. But don't worry me about it; pray. I assure you it wasn't any bosh about honor or virtue that made me refuse to bribe the Wilvertonians; it was only laziness, on my word; I hated the bore of St. Stephen's, and didn't know how else to get rid of the affair. Indolence is hereditary and chronic in me. I can't help it."

"Well, well, you lost the election, so there's an end of it," said the Marquis, impatiently, in happy ignorance of the sneer on his son's lips, "but with regard to your marrying. Well, don't you think you could do it?"

"Decidedly, I *could* do it," replied St. Albans, with a glance at himself in an opposite mirror.

"Then *do* do it. You have only to choose; any wo-

man would have you. I don't mean a *nouvelle riche*, you shouldn't ally us with a *parvenue* to save yourself from starving; but such as Lady Elma Fer——"

"Not for an *El Dorado*! She is eight-and-twenty, is freckled, and has red hair——"

"Pray what does beauty matter in a wife? You will have plenty of beauties left elsewhere, won't you?"

"I hope so; but I shouldn't be able to enjoy them, for one *tête-à-tête* with a freckled woman would have killed me."

"Talk sense," interrupted old Glen, angrily. "One would think you had no brains, Cyril. Look at it rationally. Is there anything for you but to make a rich marriage?"

St. Albans took a few silent puffs from his hookah with a profound sigh, and answered not.

"I can give you no money, and you have the devil's own taste for expensive pleasures and *raffinés luxuries*; you have lived at double the rate your brothers have for the last fifteen years. Go on as you are now, you must go to the dogs your own way; *I* can't help you; I'm en route there myself. Marry an heiress, your difficulties are cleared, and you can have your pleasures à votre gré. As for wanting beauty in your wife,—one would think you were twenty! Your mother was plain; she had good blood and money, but she was remarkably plain; you take all your beauty from me. Now there is Avarina Sansreproche, most unobjectionable in every way, will be Baroness Turquoise and Malachite in her own right; not exactly pretty, perhaps, but very good style: a woman who would never do a silly thing, or make a dubious acquaintance. Her mother, I know, would not object to the alliance; in fact, you need only be a little rational and passive, and I could arrange it for you; the mere

whisper of an alliance with her would quiet those Jews in a moment. Are you listening, Cyril?"

St. Albans yawned and stretched himself a little more comfortably: "Most attentively, sir; but you must really excuse my answering; it's too warm to talk."

"Well, say yes or no, if that's not too much exertion. You are in a perfect Gordian knot of difficulties. Do you see any way of cutting it but the one I propose?"

His son yawned again, sighed, and took a long whiff of his perfumed hubble-bubble:

"My dear governor, if you *will* make me speak, no, I don't see any other way; I wish I did, because really the trouble of thinking is odious; the day's so much too close to do anything but drink Seltzer."

"You admit you don't see any other way of getting out of your labyrinth of debts, and going on smoothly in the future?" Cyril St. Albans shut his eyes and shifted his cushions:

"I said I didn't—pray don't worry. I dare say I could get a very good living as model to the artist fellows; they want handsome men, and I've no doubt my hand alone would bring in a very fair sum. But you'd think that rather derogatory to the family, you see; so that career ain't open to me."

Lord Glen laughed, and rose from his chair:

"Don't be a fool, Cyril, but go and call in Wilton Crescent. Think over what I have said, and act like a practical man for once, if you can. You *must* marry Avarina, for I can tell you for your comfort that bookmakers are beginning to back Coronation very confidently, and that I know on good authority Caradoc hasn't himself the confidence in Grey Royal that you fancy; that mare will no more win the Queen's Cup than your Park hack."

With which consolatory last hit the Marquis shut the

door, and went down stairs to his brougham, while St. Albans, dropping the mouthpiece of his hookah, dropped his head on his hands with a bitter sigh:

"If she doesn't win I shall be ruined. What a fool I have been to mesh myself in such a net of debts and entanglements! How I shall get out of them, God knows! And now he wants me to patch up my fortunes by marriage. Avarina Sansreproche! Faugh!—the Queen's Bench were better than that. He is right—I am going to the dogs, and dragging others with me too. By Jove! if he knew all, poor old fellow, it would bring on a fit, or he would console himself by cutting me in Pall-Mall. I can't go on long like this; yet Heaven knows what I had better do. Marry Avarina Sansreproche! Faugh!"

His rooms were the most luxurious of any in the Albany, or in any bachelor house in town; his breakfast was served in a silver and Dresden service fit for a young princess; piles of rose, green, and cream-hued little notes, and a swarm of invitation-cards to all the best houses, lay on his writing-table; he belonged to the best set, drove the best horses, and was a member of the best clubs in London; but for all that St. Albans, as he leant his head on his hands, with a very real and unmistakable sigh, and dropped the languid, bored, *léger* tone he had used about his difficulties to his father, had about as much worry just then on his shoulders as any man going in London.

"Marry!" he said to himself, picking up his hookah again. "What on earth put that into his head? What's the time—one? I'll order the tilbury, and go and see her again."

"I want Cyril to marry," said Lord Glen, that same moment, in one of the windows of the Conservative, to

me. Having been at Eaton with St. Ablans and his elder brother, Fainéant, I had often spent the holidays with them when a boy, and parts of the vacations when we were all together at Granta, and often go down in September to the Marquis's first-rate battues, or to stalk red deer in his forest of Glen-Albans—"I want him to marry: you're a good deal with him, do your best to persuade him, there's a good fellow."

"You want him to marry, sir? What for, in the name of Heaven? St. Albans is the last man in the world to suit that sort of harness, and I thought you——"

"Were the last man to advocate it? Of course I am. At the same time, if you're going to the deuce, you must put on any drag that'll keep the wrecks from going down hill, must you not? You know Cyril's extravagance as well as I do. The best thing in the world would be for him to marry well, and the alliance I desire for him, is Avarina Sansreproche. I have reason to believe, too, that Lady Turquoise is as inclined to the arrangement as myself. Nothing can be more suitable. She is three-and-twenty, eminently good style——"

"As cold as a statue, sir!"

The Marquis took a pinch out of his enamelled tabatière, with a picture of Clara d'Ische by Mignard.

"The most desirable thing a wife can be. She will not fall in love with other men."

"But not at all fit for Cyril!"

"I hardly apprehend you. Fit for him? I am no; asking them to raffole of each other—he is a man of the world, she is a woman of good sense—I merely want them to marry. I think she is admirably fitted for Cyril, ne vous en déplaîse. She has good blood, great fortune; he would be exigeant, indeed, to ask more."

"Perhaps; for all that, sir, I doubt if you will ever bring St. Albans round to think with you. Mrs. Sans-reproche isn't pretty enough to please him, and I am sure he will hate being tied, however light you may make his fetters."

"What will you bet me that I, being allowed to manage it as I find best, shall see Cyril married within—let me see—I will say by the end of the season?"

I laughed :

"Very well, sir. I don't know anything about it, but I wouldn't mind betting you a pony that by the end of the season you'll see no such thing. My dear lord, St. Albans will no more let himself be married than I shall."

Lord Glen entered the wager duly in his mem.-book.

"You will lose, my good fellow. He will marry when I wish him. He must. He lives very gaily and expensively. I don't expect him to do otherwise. But you know he has nothing—we anciens pauvres never have; the racaille get all the money in these democratic days. So you and Bellaysse tied at Hornsey-wood yesterday? you shot off the ties early; Delamere told me the sun was so in your eyes you could hardly mark the birds."



II.

HOW THE MARQUIS BEGAN THE CAMPAIGN.

"WHAT the deuce were you doing with yourself yesterday at noon? I thought you never went out before two, and I positively called at twelve, because I particularly wanted to see you, and Soames said you wern't at home,"

said Lord Glenallerton, in a considerably injured tone, two days after in the smoking-room of the Guards' Club.

St. Albans dropped his eye-glass, and laid down the paper.

"My dear governor, if you will call on men at barbarian hours, you must expect valets, who have a decent idea of the blessings of slumber and peace, to tell a mild fib in their master's service. You don't *really* mean you would have had the heart to get me up at noon, do you?"

"Certainly I should. You can get up early at Glen-Albans to go after deer, surely you can get up early in town to talk to me. It is seldom enough I want the trouble of seeing you. But your man said positively you were out. I asked him if he meant 'not visible,' and he said no, you were not at home."

"Stupid fool!" said Cyril, sotto voce, as he took his Manilla out of his mouth. "Bon père! is it possible I should remember so far back as yesterday what I did with myself? Be reasonable! I have lived—let me see—thirty-one, thirty-two—positively thirty-four hours since then!"

The Marquis looked at him, took out his tabatière, and shrugged his shoulders.

"You can leave your memory behind you sometimes, my good fellow, as completely and conveniently as a bribed witness! I don't want to know what you did with yourself. Heaven forbid! I came to advise you to hedge as much as possible. From all I hear, I am certain Grey Royal is very unsafe. None of that breed ever had any pace in them yet. Listen a minute, Cyril, and take counsel, if you can." With which he dropped his voice, and detailed some chronique scandaleuse of the unsoundness of Grey Royal, second favorite for the Ascot Cup, which was going the round of some Turf circles, and altering

the odds at the rooms. "I have warned you. I have said my last word about that cursed mare," said the Marquis as he rose. "You will come to my house to-night, Cyril?"

"Do you want me dreadfully? Can't you let me off?"

"No; it is very odd if you cannot spare an hour to show yourself in my rooms. I do not choose every one in town should be seen at my parties but you, and that my sons should shun my house alone of anybody in London. Fainéant is abroad, I don't speak of him; and Julian I have done with long ago. He has taken up the patriotic and philanthropic clap-trap, let him keep to it. It is so excessively low! I don't know what we should have thought in the Regency of men who ought to be gentlemen, lecturing as if they were the drunken cobblers of a Methodist gathering, and pottering about Ragged Schools to get a little vulgar toadying, and heading Social movements as if they were Chartists or Sensationists—it is so horridly low all that! But you, *you* are a man of good taste and good breeding, Cyril; it hurts me that you should never be seen at my house."

That speech was quite true. If Lord Glen likes anybody it is his second son, who has his wit, his beauty, and is, as the Marquis will complacently tell us, "exactly what I was forty years ago." But it was a craftily timed speech for all that, and St. Albans fell into the trap; he looked kindly at his father, and drank some hock and Seltzer.

"I'll come, governor!"

"The devil, I never remembered that woman!" said St. Albans, under his breath, on the top of the staircase of his father's house in Berkley Square. "That's what he bothered me to come here for, and I never thought of her!"

I followed his glance, which was though the doorway, into the Marquis's salons, where all the *crème de la crème* were gathering and commingling; and there, among other Belgraviennes, I saw Avarina Sansreproche, the subject of the Marquis's diplomacy and my wager, the future Lady Cyril St. Albans, and sole heiress prospective to her mother's barony of Turquoise and Malachite. She was what we call by complaisance a fine girl: she was not handsome or interesting, or brilliant, but she was clever, dressed well, of course, and was eminently good style, as Lord Glen averred; she was very cold in manner, and rumor said of not the sweetest temper; but she had a distinguished air, looked indisputably an aristocrat (an inestimable pleasure in these days of trademade heiresses and parvenues *châtelaines*,) and from her height and figure told well in a ball-room.

Altogether, considering how good an alliance she would be, she was not a woman to merit the disdainful and disgusted tone with which St Albans murmured his uncomplimentary words on the staircase as he caught sight of her at his father's ball, which made me smile as I heard them, to think how little likely the Marquis was to win his bet, and shackle his son with matrimonial handcuffs with all his skill at diplomacy, and his Rochefoucauldean knowledge of men and their weaknesses.

Avarina looked very well that night, and her mother smiled her most gracious smile when St. Albans drew near them, and stopped to say a few words to them before passing on. True, the future Baroness might have looked for an elder rather than a younger son, but the St. Albans were one of the oldest and noblest houses in the Peerage. A cadet of that family was preferable to the head of many others, and Lord Glenallerton was leader in the Upper House of that great political party

to which Lady Turquoise, as vehement an intriguer as Madame de Longueville or the Duchess of Devonshire, belonged heart and soul. Cyril was his favorite son; he did not care about Fainéant, who was plain, like la feue Marquise, and had never been in his good graces for that reason, the Marquis rating beauty as highly as any woman. His third son, Julian, he had, as he said, done with long ago, Julian being member for Bottleborough, and taking a utilitarian view and educating-of-the-masses line, which was naturally the antipodes of his predilections, and disgusted him too much for remonstrance; but Cyril always pleased him: his manner, his air, his tastes, his person, his way of life, were all in accordance with his views of what a gentleman and a St. Albans ought to be. Cyril was his favorite son, and therefore did he and Lady Turquoise tacitly agree—perhaps, even, in a little boudoir conference, admit to each other their agreement—in the choice of an alliance for Avarina.

“Cyril, you entreated me to be your envoy, and I have had the happiness to succeed in my embassy. Miss Sans-reproche has done you the honor to reserve you a place on her tablets,” said that clever old lord, with that gallant grace of air which had gained him so many *bonnes fortunes*, and won him so brilliant a reputation in the old Regency days with Alvanly and Pierrepont. Men of condition, as Walter Scott says, never show what they feel, let them be startled, bewildered, or dismayed as they may, or, for a certainty, St. Albans would have shown his amazement at his father’s adroit invention. “For a lie gracefully told, commend me to the governor!” he thought, as, *bon gré mal gré*, he bowed his thanks to Avarina for an honor he had certainly been most innocent of soliciting.

Cootes and Tinney’s band were playing the *Dinorah*

Quadrilles, and he had to give her his arm and lead her to the ball-room, let in for it as neatly as any man could be, while the Marquis stroked a little moth off his Blue Riband with an inward smile of complacency. His first minor move in diplomacy had succeeded, and perhaps St. Albans, though it bored him just then, would thank him afterwards. When one is drowning, one is grateful to anybody that flings us a rope, however tarred and rough a one.

"Hallo, old fellow, you are leaving early. Avarina Sansreproche won't be flattered, will she?" said I, as about an hour afterwards, having three or four other places to go to that night, I left Lord Glen's, and met St. Albans just going to his cab.

"Avarina Sansreproche be hanged!" said he, between his teeth, as he stopped to light a Manilla. "Marry merely for money—buy freedom from my difficulties with that girl's gold—how low my father must think that I have sunk! Live on your wife's money! Good God, what lower degradation could there be?"

"Lots of men do it, though, old fellow, and think it none, when there's no better way of clearing themselves out of their difficulties."

"Exactly," said St. Albans, in his ordinary languid tone, with his pet semi-yawn, semi-sigh; "But, my good Hervey, only think of the horror of having to hear settlements read, and the worry of going through the marriage ceremony! It's far better of the two to go to the dogs quietly and gently, in a pleasant way, than to put the matrimonial drag on the wheels, and avoid Cerberus only to fall into the hug of Hecate. I've no scruples about anything, except about worrying myself. I don't care how low I sink, but you must please line the pit with rose-leaves. I wouldn't mind selling myself to

the devil at all if that gentleman were in that style of trade now, and paid handsomely, but I couldn't sell myself to a wife—indeed I couldn't; marriage is an awful price to pay for a little monetary security. Fancy a woman who'd think she had a right over you, and who'd persist in bothering you, and lecturing you, and ferreting out where you went! It's better to give Leoni Levi cent. per cent. than to go through the ennui of a honeymoon. Fancy doing rural felicity, and raptures, and all the rest of it, and having to make love to the same woman one whole month long! I'd rather go to a Neapolitan prison. Why, a week of it, Hervey, would kill you or me. Milner, drive as fast as you can," said St. Albans, flinging his fusee into the gutter, and getting into his Hansom.

"Are you going to La Bonbonnière's? If you are, we can go together."

"La Bonbonnière's! No. I rarely go there now."

"What the deuce for? Have you quarrelled?"

The Comtesse de la Bonbonnière was a very charming little woman, and St. Albans had found no boudoir so attractive, and no opera suppers so agreeable as those in her Section of the French embassy.

"Quarrelled? Jamais! But we raffoled of each other last season; it's in the nature of things that we're tired of one another this! Good night. Drive fast, Milner!"

"Where to, my Lord?"

"To Richmond!"

His Hansom dashed round the corner at a pace that might have won a trotting-match, and I got into my own cab, and drove off to a ball at Carlton House Terrace, thinking to myself that, with Cyril's views on marriage, the old lord, with all his diplomacy, was not very likely to win his bet, and persuade his son to enter the holy bond, St. Albans being about the last man in town

to assume the matrimonial fetters, or endure them when they were on. He was a man sworn to pleasure, and to pleasure alone; he led a gay, laissez-faire, agreeable, extravagant life; was a leader of fashion, and a referee at clubs; hated worry, loved luxury, was utterly unused to any restrictions, and was, *en un mot*, the very last sort of man to be coaxed, driven, coerced, propelled, or led in any way into the shackles Lord Glen proposed for him. But great is the might of money, and when you have Queen's Bench on one side of you, and Hanover Square on the other, there is no knowing *what* you may do, *mon ami*, or which of the evils you may fancy the lesser; so, with all the odds in my favor, I hardly felt sure of winning the bet I had made in the Conservative.

"You *must* marry, Cyril," said old Glen imperatively, as meeting St. Albans in St. James's Street the next morning between two and three he walked down there with him.

"My dear governor, so we must all *die*, but the obligation isn't an agreeable one; why refer to it? Positively, you're as cruel as a priest laying the skull and cross-bones right on the top of one's rose chaplets. The idea of bringing up horrid topics on a cool pleasant May morning like this!" answered St. Albans, stroking his moustaches.

The Marquis gave a little growl and a contemptuous sneer.

"I thought you were a man of the world."

"Did you? Far from it. I'm the most innocent and unsophisticated person; no man more so, but merit's always misjudged."

Lord Glen gave a short laugh of amusement, as well he might.

"I thought you were a man of the world, too much of one not to know that such a very unimportant step as

marriage can matter nothing in our ranks. If your wife be in a bad temper, you have nothing to do but to leave her; if she begin a quarrel, go and dine at White's or the Guards'; if she bother you very much, have a separate establishment. You are not like a man of the middle class with a limited income, resting on a clientèle who *viser* all his actions, and would desert him if he tried to get a little liberty, or openly infringed their pet clap-trap of the domesticities. *We*, thank Heaven! have plenty of amusement, and don't want that very tame substitute, domestic happiness. We've cognac and Clicquot, and leave that weak tea to the poor devils who can't get anything better. Be sensible, Cyril; of all the married men we know, on which of them has his wife any influence? Which of them allows her to trouble him the least? Of course not; *he* is in the world, *she* is in the world; they go their own ways, and neither troubles the other. So will you and Avarina; she is far too sensible a woman to want a lover's devotion from you, or any of that nonsense; you may keep it for Madame de la Bonbonnière; she is a Frenchwoman, and likes sentiment. I perfectly understand your reluctance: you are a man of pleasure, naturally you dislike anything that may interfere with or limit your pleasure, but, believe me, in seventy-eight years I have seen a little of life, Cyril; marriage will not make the slightest difference to you; you will live in Belgrave Square instead of the Albany, that is all." St. Albans listened and walked on in silence. "You *must* marry," reiterated the Marquis. "Grey Royal has no more pace in her than a cab-horse; what could possess you, my dear boy, to venture so much on that miserable chestnut?"

St. Albans drew his breath hard, and turned paler for a second.

"You recommend me to marry, governor?" he said, after a pause.

"I do, most decidedly."

"Very well, I'll think about it; don't worry me any more," said St. Albans, languidly. "Faugh! how that fellow that passed us was scented with musk! Are you going into White's? - I am."

III.

HOW LORD GLEN CONGRATULATED HIMSELF ON HIS VICTORY.

I HAVE always liked the Marquis myself; he has no deep feelings to trouble him, he is an egotistical and worldly old gentleman; he sometimes tilts with the most amiable unconsciousness against your tenderest wounds, and makes you writhe without ever noticing it; but I always liked him, always shall; he is very clever, very amusing, ever good natured, ever hospitable, and is as fond of his second son, in his own way, as he could be of any one. I should be very glad if anybody would tell me why novelists always fancy it necessary to make their characters *either* good or bad, quite one or quite the other; the majority of people about in the world are, it seems to me, *neither* the one nor the other exclusively, but a mixture of both, as the Mocha your valet brings you up in the morning is coffee and chicory equally mixed. Five people out of six have no marked characters at all, and the generality one meets could neither be taxed with any remarkable vice nor honored for any remarkable virtue; they would ruin your peace with their

malice, but would not touch you with a dagger for the world, and are capable neither of a positively noble action nor of a positively bad one. You must have force of character for the extreme of both good and evil. Half the people in society are like my friend Lord Glen, who would have been insulted, no person more so, had you asked him to do anything dishonorable; but could see nothing degrading in the advice he gave his son, honestly thinking it was the best St. Albans could receive and follow, to make a rich marriage, that he might quiet his creditors now, and live on his wife's money afterwards.

"I shall win, my dear fellow," said he to me at a morning party at Fulham, as he stood stirring the cream in a cup of Souchong under a great chestnut-tree on the lawn, where our band was playing *Trovatore* airs and new waltzes, and we were eating Neapolitan ices, flirting, and playing croquet or lawn billiards with some hundred or so of our kind in the grounds of Lady Rosediamond's bijou of a dower-house. I followed his glance, which was to where Avarina sat, looking more animated than usual, and talking to St. Albans.

"Do you think so, sir? I hope not. Tin's the best of all blessings, Heaven knows, but, my dear lord, he's the last fellow in the world to be put into the bondage of marriage, even for that. The idea of St. Albans married!"

"I was just such a man as Cyril at his age, and I married, but I can assure you I made the fetters so light I did not know I wore them. Any sensible man may, if he likes. Cyril will marry Avarina, my dear Hervey, and will thank me very much for having made him the alliance. I knew I should bring him round to my views; he is a sensible fellow, really, though he has a few

strange Quixotic ideas, like those about his election. I cannot imagine where he has got them; the St. Albans were never romantic, nor the Dormers either, and romance is such a *very* queer thing to linger in a man who has lived as my son has done. He will marry Avarina, mon garçon, and I am very glad of it—very glad.” And the Marquis finished his tea, and turned to Lady Rose-diamonds in the best possible spirits at the coming success of his diplomacy.

“Dine with me to-night, Hervey?” he asked, when the haute volée, as the journals called us next day, was dispersed, and Avarina and her mother were rolling back to Belgravian. “And you, Cyril?”

“I, sir?” said St. Albans. “Thank you, no. I’m engaged for this evening.”

“Ah! no doubt; where to, may I ask?”

I dare say Lord Glen had a fond hope that the answer would be Wilton Crescent, but it wasn’t; it was brief enough: “Richmond.”

“Richmond? A man dinner, or a boating party, or what? You are always dining at Richmond, it seems to me; you were there on Monday, and yesterday too; with all the best houses in town open to you, I wonder you take the trouble to go all the way down there with a few men, or a few danseuses. Yesterday you threw over the Duchess’s dinner for some Richmond affair. I have no business with what you do with yourself, of course, but it is unlike you, and bad taste, you are generally so very difficile. Won’t you be back in time for Protocol’s reception to-night?”

St. Albans shook his head:

“My dear governor, why should I go to Protocol’s? The atmosphere will be at 70 deg. I should be crushed comme d’ordinaire, and I should only reach the green

drawing-room and the Countess after three hours' steady toil. I've done so many of these things, please don't ask me; my health's too delicate to stand the fatigues of an assembly just yet again."

"Very odd," said Lord Glen to himself, as St. Albans drove off nodding a good-by to his father. "Last season Cyril was at every reception in town; he is surely never losing his taste for good society!"

I don't suppose the Marquis liked Avarina Sansreproche, as he had a special contempt for any but very lovely women, save for matrimonial alliances. The St. Albans women and men are a family of great beauty, and have been famed for it for many generations; and Lord Glen sets the greatest possible store on it, both in himself and others, therefore I don't suppose he had any particular admiration for his future daughter-in-law; but if he made love for himself in the Regency days half so gracefully and gallantly as he now made it for his son, the reputation he won when he was Viscount Fainéant was not to be wondered at. And if St. Albans was rather lax in his courtship, the Marquis did his best to cover and make up for his short-comings. St. Albans, though I suppose reconciled, was hardly as enchanted as his father; I fancied, now and then, there came over his face a look of genuine worry; and he was less in society than usual, which, considering he was a man whom you met everywhere each season, and lived in the highest and gayest mondes, was only traceable to one cause not complimentary to Miss Sansreproche—that he did not care to have more of her society than he was forced, till he was linked to her for life. But Avarina bore it heroically; she went on her ways showing herself with her equable grace of manner at concerts, and dinners, balls, and déjeûners. She was evidently, as Lord Glen said, a

sensible woman, who neither gave nor expected any romantic nonsense; and though she smiled pleasantly when she and St. Albans met in the Ride or at the Opera, or any of the numerous balls, dinners, and assemblies, she smiled just as pleasantly at me, or at the old Duchess of Lapislazuli, or at her terrier Azor. She did not seem to want St. Albans's attention, which was particularly lucky, for he did not seem inclined to pay it, but let that part of the affair devolve on his father. The rumor of their engagement got among the on dits of town, and one morning, in the *Conservative*, I read, among other fashionable intelligence, "It is rumored that a matrimonial alliance is projected between Lord Cyril St. Albans, second son of the Most Hon. the Marquis of Glenallerton, and the Hon. Avarina Sansreproche, only daughter and sole heir of the Baroness of Turquoise and Malachite and the late Hon. George Sansreproche." The old lord standing by me pointed to the paragraph, smiled, and took out his enamelled box.

"Mon garçon, never bet with an old diplomatist!"

"The deuce, sir! Is it une affaire accomplie, then?"

"Of course!"

The Marquis gave me a glance that said: "Do you suppose anything *I* undertook could fail to be?"

"Has St. Albans positively proposed to her?"

"Proposed? No, I believe not; but the affair is quite arranged, and perfectly understood by every one. Lady Turquoise and I——"

"Then there is no hope for him?"

"No *fear*, you mean, *bécasse*! No, the marriage is as certain as if it had already taken place, and it will be the best step of his life."

"Well, sir, I hope it may but, on my life, for St. Al-

bans to marry seems as bad as for him to shoot himself. He's the last man in the world——"

The Marquis shrugged his shoulders, and tapped his box-lid amusedly.

"You men of the present generation are strange fellows! You speak of a good alliance made from social and sensible motives as dolefully as if it were a miserable, infatuated love-match. Cyril will marry, and will thank me very much for my advice. I told you I should win; there was never any doubt about it!"

"St. Albans was sitting in the bay-window of White's half an hour after, when I went there, reading the morning papers, and, as his eyes fell on the paragraph that concerned himself, something suspiciously like a sneer went over his face. I suppose he thought it was an announcement of his own sale, similar to the announcement of the sale of a noble and costly library by Christie and Manson, or of a chestnut two-year-old by Tattersall.

"So you are really going in for marriage, St. Albans?" said Brabazon of the 2nd Life Guards.

St. Albans looked up for a moment, as if he were positively startled by the very innocent and natural query; then he yawned behind his paper, stroked his moustaches, and stretched himself:

"My good fellow, if I were going to be hanged to-morrow, would you think it good taste to remind me of my doom?"

"By George! I wish Avarina heard you. *Is that paragraph true? You married! Jupiter! who will credit it! You're a fit fellow to take matrimonial vows, certainly. Your wife will little know what a Tartar she has caught, if she heard some stories I could tell her!*"

St. Albans smiled a little:

"Even if you did, Charlie, I would bet you my wife

would like me better, with all my faults, than any man (if there be one) without any at all. My dear fellow, you forget you talk to the most attractive man in town."

He spoke the first words half sadly, but the last in his own léger, languid way, with a gay laugh. Brabazon laughed too, and began to talk of the latest odds taken for the Ascot Cup next week.

"Grey Royal hasn't a chance with Coronation and Beau Sire; she'll never win. I never knew one of the Capel Caradoc's horses that did," said Wyndham, contemptuously.

"Grey Royal! I believe you. She's a clever-looking little mare, but she wouldn't win the Consolation Scramble," added Tom Vane. "She'll let you in heavily, St. Albans, take my word.

St. Albans laughed:

Very likely. Most things feminine betray confidence, whether equine or human. But I'm resigned. Where's the good of worrying? It never makes anything better; there's nothing worth vexing oneself about under the sun; it only makes lines in your forehead, and spoils your good looks. The governor's an Epicurean, and so am I; we never bother ourselves; if things go smoothly, well and good; if they don't, we turn our backs on them."

"What a lucky dog that is," said Brabazon to me, as St. Albans went out of White's. "Nothing troubles him; his life's one long lounge of delicious far niente, except, I suppose, he's deep with the Jews; but if they know he's going to marry into such a lot of tin as the Sansreproches, they'll let him alone fast enough."

St. Albans went home to the Albany, drank down some iced water and sherry, and threw himself into an écarté chair, worry enough on him, now that he was alone and could give reins to it.

“By Heaven! if that mare only wins I will never bet again, I swear. If she lose, I must sell my horses and everything available, pay the debts of honor as best I may, and leave England. My father is right: I live at the rate of a man with thirty thousand a year, and if I lose on that race, God knows what I am to do! And I have drawn her into my fate as well, poor child! She loves me: she would risk, do, endure anything on earth for me. But she knows nothing of the world; she little dreams what it is for a man of pleasure to have ruin stare him in the face, and threaten to rob him of all his luxuries, pleasures, appliances, all he values, even perhaps to his good name. Poverty, I verily believe, would be bearable to her with me; but, God help her! I am too spoiled by the world to reach her standard, or learn her unselfishness.”

The other night, amis lecteurs, while we of the West were waltzing and flirting, dining and laughing, in the East the great fire was raging, and Death was busy at his work. While we of Belgravia and May-fair were talking and laughing at White's, and the Guards', and the National, drinking claret and Clicquot at a hundred dinners, waltzing young beauties round a hundred ball-rooms, dashing through the lighted streets from one assembly to another, listening to the swell of the Huguenots overture, and the farewell cadence of Grisi's song, in the city the vast billows of flame were rolling up to the stars, scorching the calm summer night with their lurid breath, hissing like fiery serpents through the doomed roofs, lashing the river into sheets of fire, breaking the stillness of the June evening with bursts like thunder, and clutching human life into their fell embrace. How vast the difference that night between the two quarters of our city, close as they lay together—how

strange the glittering gaiety of the one, the interminable horror of the other! But almost as vast, almost as strange is the difference between the outward and the inward life of men, the life that is for society, and the life that is for solitude—the calm, the nonchalance, the gaiety that we see in the one, the storm, the fury, the devastation that may rage, unknown to us, in the other.

IV.

HOW OUR BET WAS DRAWN.

Ascot week came, and Grey Royal won! beating Coronation, who had been winner of the Two Thousand the year before, and Beau Sire, who had been second at the Derby, throwing everybody out of their calculations, and gaining the Red Riband of the Turf for Capel Caradoc; giving the lie to all her foes' predictions, and proving herself worthy of her few staunch friends' trust, like a well-bred, clever, unpretending little chestnut as she was. Grey Royal won, and so by her did St. Albans. He drove me down on the Cup-day, and never had I seen him so agitated about the issue of a race. He always betted considerably, and always took his gains or his losses with that light *laissez-faire* philosophy arising from the mixture in his character of generosity and carelessness, sweet temper and indolence, which he had practised all his life; but that day it deserted him. He was very pale; he looked anxious and agitated; and as for the last ten yards Coronation and Grey Royal held neck by neck together, I heard his quick, loud

breathings, that told how much was at stake for him on the issue of the race. Grey Royal won, the Marquis was fain to confess he had been in the wrong, and his son looked like a man who had received a reprieve from the gallows or the guillotine, and drove us back to town in spirits too genuinely gay to be forced or assumed.

"So that chestnut of Caradoc's won, after all!" said the Marquis to me on the Heath. "I am glad she did. I know Cyril had risked a great deal of money upon her, and if he has won considerably he can free himself of one or two of his more pressing debts before his marriage. But I dare say you know more of how his affairs stand than I do."

"St. Albans, you must dine with us at the Star and Garter to-morrow," said Brabazon, as we drove home. "You must. No, hang it! we won't let you off, will we, Hervey? You're beginning to grow unsociable. That's what comes of being an engaged man, or next door to it. There won't be any women, so Avarina can't be scandalized if she hears of it."

St. Albans laughed.

"My dear fellow, I shouldn't mind scandalising Miss Sansreproche in the least."

"As a préparatif to what she'll have to encounter afterwards, eh? Well, that's only fair. You'll come then, Cyril? I'll call for you at half-past six, if you like?"

"Very well, do."

He didn't seem over willing, I thought, despite the preference his father had accused him of giving to Richmond dinners over private ones. Whether he was or not, however, Brabazon took him and me up at White's the next day, and the Marquis nodded his son a good-humored adieu from the bay window.

"Cyril asked me what time he could see me alone to-morrow," he thought, complacently, as he returned to his papers. "To tell me he has proposed to Avarina, no doubt! Ah! adroit management always succeeds. It is only your bunglers who fail—your *maladroits*, who push the thing too far, or do not push it far enough."

Brabazon's dinner was a very pleasant one. He had about ten or a dozen men, and we were as comfortable as we ever are when we're alone. (*Passez-moi le mot, mademoiselles; ungallant it may sound, but it is true, and truth is so very great a rarity, that of course you value it as you do green roses, pink pearls, old point, or any other exceptional treasure.*) We could talk what we liked, we could smoke when we would, we had not to rake up current chit-chat for Lady Adeliza nor go through an examination in chamber-music for Miss Concerto; it was a pleasant dinner from the fish to the move, which did not inaugurate the exit of ladies, but the entrance of coffee, and a lounge at the windows to scent the honeysuckles and drink iced waters.

"Hervey," said Brabazon, suddenly, "do you remember that girl we saw as we came back from Telfer's boating party? You do! Well, I told you, didn't I, I'd find out something about her? I sent Evans down to inquire what he cou'd, but he's such a stupid fool, he only brought me word that the house was called Brooke Lodge, as if I cared a hang for the name of the *place*! I must ferret her out somehow. She was such a pretty little dear! If I see her in that garden again, I'll speak to her, I vow, for all she flew away as if we were ogres."

"How do you know your acquaintance will be desired or accepted?" said St. Albans from another window, in a short tone utterly unlike his own.

I looked at him surprised. There was a flush of

annoyance on his face, and he pulled down his left wrist-band impatiently. Brabazon laughed:

"What a shocking fellow you are, St. Albans! Can't you let one talk of a single woman without wanting to appropriate her? Poor Avarina, *je la plains!* But do you know my little beauty?"

"What may her name be?" said St. Albans, with his teeth set hard on his Manilla.

"Marchmont, I think; I mean to find out more about her. She's too good to be lost, if attainable; she's the loveliest little thing, on my honor, and you know——"

St. Albans stroked his moustaches impatiently, an angry flush mounting over his forehead. I had never seen him look so irritated in his life.

"I know one thing, that if you want to be home in time for Lady Wentworth's theatricals, you must start. It is ten o'clock," he said, looking at his watch, and flinging his Manilla into the garden below.

We did want to be in time for Lady Wentworth's, so we broke up and drove homewards, St. Albans and I, in Brabazon's trap. St. Albans chose the back seat, and was unusually silent, smoking, and entering but little into mine and Brabazon's conversation, which was chiefly on the score of the girl whom we had seen a few days before, when we were on the river, throwing a stick into the water, towards which her garden sloped down, for her dog to fetch, and whose face had caught Brabazon's eye, and pleased him so well that he couldn't forget it, and being an inflammable fellow, had sworn to see it again, which appeared to him tolerably practicable, as, by all his servant could hear, she seemed to be living alone, save a few domestics, and rather a mysterious young lady altogether, going by the name of Miss Marchmont. He was destined to keep his oath. Just as we

drove out of Richmond we passed the palings of a garden, with laburnums and lilacs nodding their heads over them in the summer moonlight, and leaning on the top rail of the little iron gate stood this identical girl; the June evening was well-nigh as bright as day, and very pretty and striking she certainly looked in it.

"By George!" cried Brabazon, who was a devil-may-care young fellow, and that night, thanks to his having won by Grey Royal, in the mood for any sort of a lark, "there's my little beauty, I vow, looking for somebody—for me, perhaps. By Jove, I'll go and ask her!"

"Stop! Good God! are you mad?" began St. Albans, in a tone I'd never heard from him in his life; but before the words were off his lips, Brabazon pulled up, flung the reins to me, jumped down, and with a laugh, lifting his hat, went up to the gate. The girl stood as if uncertain in the dusky light, whether he was the person, whoever he was, whom she expected or not; but before he could speak to her, St. Albans sprang down, and caught hold of his arm, while the little beauty uttered *his* name, "Cyril!" with an accent of intense relief and delight.

"Brabazon, take care what you say," he began in an under tone, fiercer than that careless laissez-faire fellow had ever troubled himself to use to anybody.

The other looked up and laughed:

"The devil! I beg your pardon, St. Albans. I didn't know I was poaching on your manor; couldn't tell, could I? You abominable sly dog, I thought you'd some proprietorship in——"

"Be silent, for Heaven's sake!" said St. Albans, impetuously. "She is my *wife*! As such you must honor and respect her."

Brabazon stared aghast. "Your wife! Good God! I thought Avarina Sansreproche——"

"Is nothing to me; never was, never will be. This is my wife. Our marriage has been secret, owing to many reasons, but it must be secret no longer now insult has once approached her," said St. Albans, as he turned and beckoned to me, in his old languid, indolent style, drawing the girl's hand through his arm. "Hervey, my good fellow, it's a queer place for an introduction, ten o'clock at night at a garden gate, I must say, but will you allow me? Violet, these are two of my best friends. Lady Cyril St. Albans; Major Hervey, Captain Brabazon."

"I told Cyril twelve o'clock, and it is twenty to one; but he is never punctual. He might as well come at once; he knows I shall be delighted to hear his news, though I know what it will be. The idea of Hervey's betting me I should not manage that affair. If you set to work adroitly you are safe to succeed; skillful diplomacy always— Ah! there you are Cyril, at last. Good morning," said the Marquis, next morning, looking up from his breakfast in his house in Berkeley Square, awaiting the interview his son had requested.

St. Albans tossed himself into an easy-chair, laid his head back on the cushion, and stroked an infinitesimal terrier. "Good morning, governor. I'm come to speak to you, please."

"Speak, my dear fellow," smiled the Marquis, graciously. "I can guess your errand, but go on."

"Did I understand you rightly, sir, that you wished me to marry?"

"Quite rightly. I do wish you—most earnestly."

"You think I couldn't do better?"

"Decidedly I do. You have my full concurrence."

"I'm glad to hear that, because it's troublesome to

dispute, and you know I'm always happy to please you. Will you come and be introduced to my wife, then?"

The Marquis laughed, and stirred his chocolate:

"My dear Cyril, I congratulate you most warmly; you have acted most wisely; believe me it will be the happiest step of your life."

"I think it will!"

"I know it will. I could not tell you how much I myself am pleased. Of course you have said nothing about time yet, but if I might advise, I should hurry it on as much as possible. Your Jews——"

"I have hurried it on. I went through the ceremony, and bore it nobly, I assure you, a month ago."

The Marquis stared. "Went through the ceremony? Pardon me, I don't quite understand your jest. What do you mean?"

"I mean, *bon père*, that I *am* married!"

"Good Heavens! Avarina would never——"

"Avarina has nothing to do with it. My dear governor, I'm very sorry, but I had anticipated your advice. Don't be vexed, governor, she will do the St Albans credit; surely, you can trust my taste. I was married the day you counselled me first. We have had to keep it private, because of those deuced Jews; but there is no longer any need. I won enough at Ascot to quiet the most troublesome, and I am able to proclaim it, and introduce her now. Don't go into a fit, my dear father, for God's sake! I know you meant all kindness, but had I never met Violet, neither you nor any man would have made me sell myself for money——"

"*Violet!*" gasped the Marquis, white and breathless.

"Poor Marchmont's daughter—his only child, indeed. Do you remember him—a man in the Bays, who ran through every sou and cut to France? I met her in

Paris this spring, under very singular circumstances—romantic ones, if you like. No matter to relate them now; her father was dead, she was only eighteen, alone and unhappy with some wretched French people, and, in a word,” said St. Albans, nestling into his chair and resuming his old tone, “she pleased me, and I was so dreadfully afraid of your fettering me one day to some red-haired woman with tin, that I married her in Paris, and gave her a right to protect me.”

Lord Glenallerton gasped for breath, then rose, his indignation too great to be uttered. He looked at his son with deep, mournful, contemptuous pity.

“The girl was only eighteen—alone—unprotected—and you *married* her?”

St. Albans rose too:

“Yes, my lord, I married her! Vaurien I may be, but, thank God, I did not utterly abuse trust innocently and entirely placed in me.”

The Marquis waved his hand to the door.

“I decline to express my opinion of your conduct, or I should be obliged to use words I should regret to use to a man who bears my name. You will see your own folly in time without any enlightenment from me. I need not say I wish our acquaintance to cease from to-day. May I trouble you to leave me?—Married a woman without a farthing! Good God! And he calls himself a man of the world!” murmured the Marquis, as the door closed on his son; and he sank back in his arm-chair, crushed, paralysed, and speechless, at the ruin of all his diplomacy.

And so our bet was drawn! The MARQUIS'S TACTICS were the best joke of that season; but Rochefoucaldean philosopher though he might be, I believe their failure rankled more cruelly in Lord Glen's breast than any

lack of success at a European congress or a meeting of the Powers. He had never been foiled before—and he had made a fool of himself to so many! As for cutting St. Albans, he was too good natured to do that, and in his heart liked his son too well to be able to sit in the same club window many days without speaking to him. He considered him an *enfant perdu*, a wasted alliance—*en un mot*, a very great fool—but told him so one day with much unction, regretted that romantic element in his character, to which his downfall was to be attributed, with deep pathos, and was reconciled to him ever afterwards. He had some slight consolation when Fainéant returned from Athens, in wedding him to Avarina Sans-reproche; and if you asked him which he preferred of his two belles-filles, he would tell you—and possibly persuade himself that he told the truth—that he admires and respects the future Baroness of Turquoise and Malachite de tout son cœur, and has never pardoned “Cyril’s Folly,” as he terms the other; but as Lady Fainéant grows decidedly plainer as years rolled on, and it is Violet St. Albans with whom he laughs, jokes, and tells his Regency stories, and at whom he looked most complacently at the Drawing-room, when they were both presented “on their marriage,” the next season, I have my doubts as to his veracity, though I have too much gratitude for gold tips given me in my Eton days, and too much liking for my good friend the Marquis, ever to remind him of the one sore point of his life, and the

BET I ONCE MADE AT THE CONSERVATIVE.

BLUE AND YELLOW.

BLUE AND YELLOW.

I.

FITZ GOES DOWN BY THE EXPRESS, AND MAKES AN ACQUAINTANCE EN ROUTE.

THERE was to be an Election. The Lords and Commons hadn't hit it; one hon. gentleman had blackguarded another hon. gentleman; the big schoolboys of St. Stephen's had thrown stones at each other, and as they all lived in glass houses, the practice was dangerous; the session had not benefited the country—so far as the country could see—one bit; the *Times* opined that the nation was going to the dogs, and suggested that parliament should dissolve. The *Times* is Cæsar now-a-days, so parliament obeyed, broke itself up, and appealed to the country—*i. e.* set the Carlton and Reform counting up their money, the lawyers quarrelling for all the dirty work, and the 10*l.* voters looking out for XXX and fivers, and the country responded promptly, loving a tussle as dearly as a beagle, by sharpening its bowie-knives for the contest, wondering who would buy its votes the highest, and hunting up its stock of Blue and Yellow banners.

“So the governor wants me to stand for Cantitborough. I'm not sure I won't. I'm confoundedly tired of this life year after year. Perhaps the election will give

me a little fun. What do you say, Lady Fanny?" began my brother Fitz one morning, lying reading the *Field* and drinking strong coffee with brandy in it by way of breakfast, when I called on him in his chambers in the Albany.

This atrocious sobriquet of "Lady Fanny" arose simply, be it known, from the fact of my name being Francis, and from no womanish tendencies or taste for ass's milk, like my namesake of the Hervey family. If any of us had shown an effeminate turn, I believe the governor would have shot him straight away as unfit to cumber the earth.

"Well," I answered, "I think I would if I were you, if you don't mind spending a couple of thousand or so to buy two little letters to stick after your name, and have no objection to being cooped up on field-nights while the old women badger each other. We may have some jolly fun cajoling the independent electors, and making love to their wives and daughters."

"I think I will," said Fitz, twisting a refractory leaf round his weed. "I want something to do; and, besides, if I'm a member, they won't be able to put me in quod, that's a grand consideration. The town's so confoundedly Tory though, there'll be no end of opposition. We shall set them all together by the ears, the Blues and Yellows won't speak for years, and I shall be written up in the *Cantilborough Post* as a leveller, a socialist, a skeptic, a democrat, and all the delicious names that the slow coaches call anybody who's a little wide awake and original. Yes, I think I'll put up for it."

"Who contests it with you?" said I. I was just home from a reading tour (where, by-the-by, we read not at all, but smoked and fished determinedly) with some Trinity men, and knew nothing about my native county.

"There are two of 'em," answered Fitz; "one an old Indian, Tory out-and-out, worth a million, and consequently worshipped by his neighbors, at whom, I believe, when heated with overmuch curry and cognac, he swears more than is customary in these polite times. The next is a boy, just one-and-twenty—you know him, Cockadoodle's son. He was in petticoats the other day, but, as his father's an Earl, he's to be transplanted from the nursery to the Commons without any intermediate education. The other is that sneaking thing, that compromise between right and wrong, that hybrid animal, a Liberal Conservative. You know him, too, Augustus Le Hoop Smith; that creature who made his tin by wool, or something horrid, and bought Foxley, and set up as the patriarchal father of his people, in the new-fangled country squire style, with improved drainage, model cottages, prize laborers, and all the rest of it. Two of us must go to the wall. I shall like the fight, and you'll do the chief of the canvassing; mind, I'm no hand at soft-soaping. All I engage to do is to kiss any pretty woman there may be in the place."

"You're very kind, taking the fun and giving me the work. I suppose you know you'll have to shake hands with every one of the Great Unwashed."

"Brutes!" rejoined Fitz, who was popularly supposed to be a Socialist and Democrat; "I'll see them all hanged first!"

"And you must joke with the butchers, and have a glass with the coalheavers, and make friends with the sweeps."

"I'd sooner lose my election," rejoined the Republican.

"And you must kiss a baby or two."

The horror, loathing, and disgust expressed on Fitz's face were as good to see as "Box and Cox."

“Not to get the premiership would I touch one of the brats. Faugh! I’d lose my seat fifty times over. Of all the loathsome ideas! If you’ve nothing pleasanter to suggest, Fan, you’d better get out of the room, if you please.”

“Thank you. Don’t you remember the sensation Mr. Samuel Slunkey produced by like caresses in *Pickwick*?”

“*Pickwick* go to the devil, and you too! I shall do nothing more than give them my tin, as everything is bought and sold now-a-days, and tell them I shall vote for free trade, cheap divorces, marriage with whoever one likes, religious toleration—in fact, for liberty, ‘*liberté chérie*,’ for everything and everybody. Then, if they don’t like my opinions, they can have the Liberal Conservative instead. I shan’t care two straws.”

“Admirably philosophic! It’s lucky you’re not going to try the county. The farmers and clericals wouldn’t have you at any price. You cut at the root of their monopoly—corn-laws and tithes, church-rates and protection. However, the more fight the more fun. We shall be like a couple of terriers in a barn full of rats. When shall we go down?”

“Tuesday. I shall go to Hollywood, it’s a snug little box, and so much closer the town than the governor’s; and as he’s so ill, poor old chap, he won’t want the bother of us. I mean to have little Beaclerc as my agent; he was with me at Eton, and is the sharpest dog in Lincoln’s Inn. That’s enough business for to-day, Fan. I’m now going to Tattersall’s to look at a roan filly to run tandem with Rumpunch; then I’m to meet my lady Frisette in the Pantheon at two; and at five I’m going to dine at the Castle with Grouse and some other men. So ring the bell for Soames, and order the cab round, there’s a good boy.”

My brother (Randolph Fitzhardinge, according to the register and his visiting cards, but to us and to everybody briefly Fitz) is a fine, tall, handsome fellow, a trifle bronzed, and more than a trifle blasé, with aquiline features, a devil-may-care expression, and a figure not beat in the Guards. He has been amusing himself about in the world ever since he left Christ Church, ten years ago, and as he will come into 12,000*l.* a year whenever the governor leaves him to reign in his stead, has not thought himself necessitated to do more than live in the Albany, hunt with the Pytchley, lounge in the "bay-window," habituate the coulisses, and employ all the other ingenious methods for killing time invented by men about town. He is a good old fellow, is Fitz, and the governor's favorite, which I don't wonder at, though I believe Fitz has been more trouble to him than any of us, as far as I O Us and screws at Newmarket and Doncaster go. But he's the best oar in the Blue-Jersey B. C., the firmest seat and the lightest hand in the county, as good a batsman as any in Lord's Eleven, and these cover a multitude of sins in the governor's eyes; to say nothing that Fitz is as clear-headed, generous-hearted, plucky a fellow as any man I know—and I've a right to think so, for Fitz used to tip me royally when I was a little chap under my sisters' governess (by George! how I did hate that woman, a horrid Wurtemburger, with red hair), and he a six-foot Etonian just going up to Oxford. Besides, when I was in that devil of a mess for tying up old Burton, the proctor, to his own knocker, was it not Fitz who set it square with the governor? and when I dropped a couple of hundred over the Cambridge Stakes, backing Mosella, who was scarcely fit for a cab-horse, did not Fitz lend me the damage, with payment postponed *ad infinitum*, though he was nearly cleaned out at the time himself?

Tuesday came, and Fitz (leaving Lady Frisette dissolved in tears in her boudoir, which tears, no doubt, were dried as soon as his back was turned, as being no longer necessary, and destructive to rouge and beauty,) with Beauclerc and myself—and Rumpunch and the new filly in a horse-box—put himself in the express for Pottleshire.

We had a carriage to ourselves, and of course, as soon as we were out of Paddington, took out our pipes and began to enjoy a quiet smoke.

"I do wish," began Fitz, opening the window and taking off his cap, for it was a hot June afternoon, "they'd keep a carriage, as they do in Venice, for the muffs that can't stand the sweet odors of regalia, and not sacrifice us by boxing us up without a weed for four, six, perhaps twelve hours, or else making us pay 5*l.* for other people's olfactory fancies. I wonder somebody don't take it up. They write a lot of nonsense about this nuisance and that evil, that they're great idiots to notice at all; but if they would write up the crying injustice to smokers on British railways, there'd be something like a case—the Woolwich flogging's nothing to it."

"Wait till we've got the election, and then send a letter to the *Times* about it, signed 'M. P.,' or a 'Lover of Justice,' " said Beauclerc, a 'cute little fellow, fast as a telegraph, and sharp as a ferret's bite.

"I'll get up a petition rather, signed by all smokers, and addressed to all the directors. I think we're pretty safe for to-day. I don't fancy the express stops at more than a couple of stations between this and Cantitborough, so we are not likely to have any women to bore us. I detest travelling with women," said Fitz, looking out of the window as if he dreaded an advent of feminines along the telegraph wires. "You have to put out your pipe,

offer them your *Punch*, and squeeze into nothing to make room for their crinoline. Let's look at the Bradshaw No! we only stop twice: thought so. It will certainly be odd if we can't keep the carriage to ourselves."

With which unchivalrous sentiment Fitz poked up his pipe, cut the paper with his ticket, and settled himself comfortably. Twenty minutes after, the engine gave a shriek, which woke him out of his serenity.

"Here's Bottleston, confound it!" cried Fitz. "I know the place—there's never anybody but a farmer or two for the second class. No fear of crinoline out of these wilds."

Fitz made rather too sure. As we hissed, and whistled, and panted, and puffed into the station, what should we see on the platform but six women—absolutely six—talking and laughing together, with a maid and a lot of luggage cased up, after the custom of females, in brown holland, as if the boxes had put on smock-frocks by mistake. Fitz swore mildly as he took his pipe out of his mouth, and leaned forward to show as if the carriage was full. Not a bit of use was it—with the instinctive obstinacy of her sex, up to our very door came one of the fatal half dozen.

"There's room in here, Timbs," she said, with the supremest tranquillity, motioning to her maid to put in the hundred things—bouquet, dressing-case, book, travelling-bag, and Heaven knows what, with which young ladies will cumber themselves on a journey of half an hour.

"The perfume is extremely like that of a tobacco-shop, where there is license to smoke on the premises," whispered the intruder to one of her companions—all pretty women, by-the-by—with a significant glance at us.

The whistle screamed—the young ladies bid each other

good-by with frantic haste and great enthusiasm—the train started, throwing the maid into Beau's arms, who (as she was thirty and red-haired) was not grateful for the accident, and her mistress seated herself opposite Fitz and began to pay great attention to a poodle imprisoned in a basket, and very prone to rebel against his incarceration.

"That little brute will yap all the way, I suppose?" muttered Fitz, looking supremely haughty and stilted.

The dog's owner glanced up quickly. "Dauphin never annoys any one."

Fitz, cool as he was, loo ked caught, bent his head, and putting his pipe in his pocket with a sigh, stuck his glass in his eye and calmly criticised the young lady.

She was decidedly good style, with large bright hazel eyes and hair to match, and was extremely well got up in a hat with drooping feathers, and one of those pretty tight jackets that, I presume, the girls wear to show their figures. She was pretty enough to console Beau for the loss of his smoke, and even Fitz thawed a little, and actually went the length of offering her (with his grandest air, though,) the *Athenæum* he was reading. After a time he dropped a monosyllable or two about the weather; she was ready enough to talk, like a sensible little thing—I hate that "silent system" of John Bull and his daughters—and in half an hour Fitz had examined and admired the poodle and was forgetting his lost pipe in chatting with the poodle's mistress, when he somehow or other got upon the general election.

"We are all excitement," laughed the young lady, whose cameriste, by the way, looked rather glum on our conversation. "It is quite delightful to have anything to stir up this unhappy county. I have only lived in it

six months, but I am sure it is the dullest place in the world—the North Pole couldn't be worse."

"Is it indeed?" said Fitz. "Pray can you tell me who are the candidates?"

"General Salter, Mr. Fitzhardinge, Lord Verdant, and a Mr. Smith—Le Hoop Smith, I mean; I beg his pardon!"

"May I ask whom you favor with your good wishes?"

"They are none of them worth much, I fancy," she answered. "Mr. Fitzhardinge, I understand, is the only clever one; but everybody says he is good for nothing."

"Not exactly the man to be a member, then," observed Fitz, gravely, stroking the poodle. "What is said against him?"

"I don't know. They call him extravagant, skeptic, socialist, republican—in fact, there is no name they don't give him. I think he would do Pottleshire good for that very reason; it wants something original."

"Then you are a Radical," smiled Fitz.

She smiled too.

"It is treason for me to say so; we are all Blue à outrance. Ah! here is Cantitborough."

It *was* Cantitborough; that neat, clean, quiet, antiquated town, that always puts me in mind of an old maid dressed for a party; that slowest and dreariest of boroughs, where the streets are as full of grass as an acre of pasture-land, and the inhabitants are driven to ring their own door-bells lest they should rust from disuse.

The train stopped, and Fitz looked as disgusted at losing his travelling companion as he had done at her first appearance, and stared with "Who the devil are you?" plainly written on his face, at a young fellow who met her on the platform. Fitz was before him, though,

in handing her and the poodle out, and went to look after her luggage, for motives of his own, as you may guess. He was very graciously thanked for his trouble, had a pretty bow to repay him, and saw the poodle and its mistress off with her unknown cavalier (a brother, probably, from the don't carish way that he met her) before he got on a dog-cart and tooled us down the road to Hollywood, a snug little box two miles from Cantitborough, left him by Providence, impersonated by a godfather, with eight or nine hundred a year.

"Of course you improved the occasion, Fitz, and saw the name on the boxes?" said Beau, as we drove along.

"Of course. It's Barnardiston. I never heard of it in the county, did you, Fan? She ought to be a lady, by her style, and her voice (though it's wonderful how the under-bred ones do contrive to get themselves up, so that you can hardly tell the difference till they begin to speak, or move: *then*, I never mistake a lady.) I wonder who that young fool was who met her?"

"Why of necessity a fool because he chanced to be in your way?" laughed Beau. "He was a Cantab, I guess, by his cut; Cambridge is always stamped on those little straw hats and fast coats, as Balmoral boots indicates a strong-minded young woman, earrings out of their bonnets girls that want one to look at 'em, Quaker colors and sun-shades girls who can't go in for the attractive line, so have sought refuge in the district visiting. Bless your heart, I always know a woman by her dress."

"What do you say to Dauphin's owner, then?"

"Black hat and feathers—possibly coquettish; tight jacket—fast enough to be pleasant; general style—not fast enough to be bold; lavender gloves—good taste, but not a notion of economy; unexceptionable boots—knows

she's pretty feet, and is too wise to disfigure them," promptly responded little Beau.

"Bravo!" said Fitz, whipping up the mare (three parts thorough-bred, and one of the best goers I ever saw), "that's just my style. We'll fish the girl up, and show her that if I'm 'good for nothing' in all the other capacities of life, I'm first-rate at a flirtation; can't live without one, indeed, and I don't see why one should try, since, as the women are never easy but when were making love to them, it would be a want of charity not to oblige them. Here we are. By Jove! I hope they'll have iced the wine properly; don't you long for a bottle, Fanny?"

"Soames," said Fitz to his man, when we had discussed the champagne, which *was* iced as cold as a "wall-flower's" answer when you ask if she has enjoyed her ball—"Soames, go over this evening to Cantitborough, and find out for me if there are any people called Barnardiston living anywhere there, and bring me word all about them."

"Certainly, sir," said Soames.

And that night, when we were smoking out on the lawn, Soames, who had often sped on like errands, made his report. There was a Barnardiston *père*, a gentleman of independent fortune, living at the Larches; a Barnardiston *mère*, over whom he tyrannised greatly; a son, Mr. Herbert Barnardiston, who was at John's; two small boys, and two daughters, one, Valencia, who was engaged to the perpetual curate of St. Hildebrande's, and one, Caroline, who, as far as Soames could hear, was not engaged to anybody at all.

"Now, by George!" said Fitz, puffing his regalia in the moon's face, "Dauphin's mistress is a fat lot too good for that pursy little Low Church brute at St. Hildebrande's.

I remember being by ill luck in that church once when he was preaching, and he thumped his cushion so violently in his passion with us sinners, that he sent the dust out of it in a regular simoom, which set the old clerk off sneezing so, that we couldn't hear a word of the sermon—providential interposition, considering the malice of the discourse. I wonder if it is she? Valencía sounds more like her than Caroline."

"Calm your mind, old fellow," said Beau; "our beauty isn't engaged to a parson, take my word for it. I always know the betrothed of the Church at a glance. They're getting in training to take interest in the distribution of flannel petticoats and brown-papered tracts; they cast their eyes away from good-looking fellows, for fear they should be tempted to compare black ties with white chokers; they wear already the Lady Bountiful head of the parish air; they try to inflate themselves with big talk on the duties of a clergyman's wife, but in their secret souls are they already weighed down by the dreadful decree that 'deacons' wives must be grave, not slanderous; sober, faithful in all things;' as if women would not just as soon be put in Newgate for life as denied their natural food—scandal and flirtation. No! take comfort, Fitz, your love of the railway carriage is no parson's fiancée, I'll swear."

II.

BEAU BEGINS ONE CANVASS AND FITZ ANOTHER.

UPON my honor I never saw a funnier contrast in my life, sir, than the candidates for the borough; and when I saw them all four on the Market Hill, I never laughed

more at old Buckstone. There was first, of course, little Verdant, long, lanky, and meek-looking, like all the Cockadoodles, sitting forward on his horse's neck, as if he were afraid of tumbling off. There was his brother Conservative, Le Hoop Smith, bland, sweet smiling, and for the world like a tabby cat on its best behavior in a gorgeous turn-out, with his arms, fished up by the Herald's Office, blazoned on the panels as big as a sign-post. Then, on a fat, white shooting pony was Salter, the old fellow of the H. E. I. C. S., as round as a pumpkin and as yellow as a buttercup, who'd have thought nothing of lashing the independent electors as he'd flogged his Sepoys, and who, not being able to do that, swore at them vigorously; and then, last of all, was Fitz, haughty, dashing, "distingué" (as the shop people say of a 2s. 5d. cotton), setting all the women mad about him, and sticking on to his thorough-bred as if they were both cast together in bronze. There was no doubt of Verdant's coming in; the fact of his being the son of the only live Earl near Cantitborough secured *that*. The tradesmen were for Salter, because he ate much and paid well. The clergy and professions were for Le Hoop Smith, because he was such a pious, poetical, spotless creature (though a pompous snob, like all those money-made men); and for Fitz—Well, poor old Fitz had the women, and one or two enlightened individuals, on his side; a very small hap'orth of bread to a whole ocean of sack were all the constituents he seemed likely to gain, though Beau and other agents set to work as hard as steam-engines, and Fitz and I canvassed perseveringly, though the Socialists had a profound contempt in practice for the Canaille, whom in theory he dignified into the People; and despite his opinion that all men were equal, was not at all prepared to suffer familiarity from his unwashed brethren.

If you have ever had the ill luck, as I have had, to be in a small spiteful country town in election time, when everybody is spitting and swearing like cats on the tiles, you can fancy, sir, what Cantitborough was at this period of its history. We stirred its utmost depths. The best hotel was a Blue committee-room; its second best was a Yellow committee-room. Big-wigs talked loud of their principles; gamins flaunted rag flags in the gutters; mysterious strangers haunted its tap-rooms. Mr. Brown cut Mr. Green because he was Yellow. Mrs. A. dropped her bosom friend, Mrs. B., because she was Blue. The Town Council was divided against itself, and, consequently, couldn't stand straight on its legs (a charge, by the way, often brought against its members individually). Mary the kitchen-maid, would no longer "walk along" with James the milkman, because he was all for that "hugly Smith." Cobblin, the shoemaker, was surprised by seeing two fivers lying snug in the heel of a Wellington; and Chalice, the rector, was startled by a gentle hint that the Deanery of Turtlefat might be vacant.

"Who do you think I'm going to solicit the vote from this morning?" said Fitz at breakfast two or three mornings after.

"Pottler, of the Three Kings, I hope," said Beau, helping himself to a devil, "if you do what you ought."

"The Three Kings be shot!" said Fitz. "The barnaid there is as ugly as sin and forty, I'm certain. He's not an eye to trade to keep her; a pretty face at a bar disposes of numberless shilling glasses."

"Old Hops, then; and *do* remember to tell him his beer is better than Bass's," said Beau, whose refractory client gave him no end of trouble.

"What! that beastly stuff, full of jack? Oh! con-

found it, I can't humbug like that; 'tisn't my line, especially with those canaille."

"The devil take your pride!" retorted Beau. "How do you expect to get along with your election, when it's such a piece of work to make you shake hands with even a respectable butcher or——"

"Pah! hold your tongue!" cried the Radical, glancing at his own white fingers. "I like the hydra-headed to have all the bread he wants, but I can't bear touching his dirty paw. I'm sure I kiss the girls, Beau, though, with most exemplary perseverance——"

"Rather too perseveringly," growled the exigent Beau. "I don't think it tells well with the fathers, and I'm quite sure it influences husbands the wrong way. You're unexceptionable with your equals, but Rumpunch herself isn't more unmanageable than you are with your inferiours. I always notice if a gentleman—I mean a thorough-bred one—takes up democracy, and all that in opinions, the more exclusive, as sure as a gun, does he grow in his actions. He may put on the bonnet rouge with the people, but he'll always expect the people to doff theirs to him. Well, it's human nature, I suppose; we're all anomalies——"

"For Heaven's sake, don't begin to moralise, Beau," said Fitz. "Of all the abominations that that pester the earth, the didactic style is the worst. Well! will you come with me to the Larches?"

"The where?" shouted Beau, in amazement.

"The Larches; where the Barnardistons hang out."

Beau dropped some cutlet, en route to his lips, off his fork, in staring at Fitz. "Are you mad? Why, he's on Verdant's committee."

"What of that? I've walked about ten entire days to

meet his daughter, and haven't met her; sequitur, I shall call there."

"Beau gave a grunt of wonder and disgust. "Of all the cool chaps, I *do* think you're the very coolest."

"Of course I am. Have you only now found it out? Ring the bell, Fan, and order the horses."

"Well," said Beau, with a touching air of resignation, "if you'd keep quiet, and do as you're told, I'd bring you in as sure as this beer's Brighton Tipper; but since you *will* act for yourself, why, if you lose your election, I wash my hands of it."

Up to the Larches rode Fitz and I, a pretty house of very white stone, and with very green Venetians—that tried hard to look like an Italian villa on a small scale, and failed signally—standing in its grounds at the west end of Cantitborough.

There she is," whispered Fitz, as he paced up the carriage drive. True enough, stooping over a bed of ver-bena, gardening seduously, with Dauphin barking furiously round her, in ecstatic delight, was our late companion de voyage. At the sound of our horses' hoofs the poodle rushed at us after the manner of small dogs, and his mistress turned round to see the cause of his irritation. Off went Fitz's hat, and he bowed to his saddle-bow. At the same moment a young lady came out of a French window, and called "Valencia!" Dauphin's mistress threw down her trowel, obeyed the summons, and went into the house; not without a bow to Fitz, though. "The devil! she *is* Valencia, and engaged to that owl, then," swore Fitz. "I say, she hasn't one bit the cut of a parson's *future*, has she? Upon my word it's a devilish pity—horrid waste of good material—to throw *her* into the Church's arms. Never mind, though; it will be the more fun for me. I shan't only have a flirtation, but

the fun of making fat little Whitechurch jealous into the bargain, which will be a little more currant-jelly to my hare."

"Glad you take it so philosophically, but it won't do you much good in the borough to flirt with their pet preacher's fiancée."

"Hold your tongue, Fanny. If I prefer a flirtation to a seat in the Commons; mayn't I indulge my preference?" said the candidate for Cantitborough, throwing his bridle to Soames, as a Buttons, that one wanted a microscope to see clearly, opened the door, and ushered us into the library of the hottest out-and-out Tory in the county.

There sat old Barnardiston in state, a tall, plethoric-looking fellow, the very embodiment of conservatism, orthodoxy, and British prejudice. It was as good as a play to see his face when the Radical candidate was shown in, and to see Fitz, with his most nonchalant yet most courtly air, address him, and solicit his vote, as if in perfect ignorance that Lord Verdant's proposer, the Bluest of Blues, Barnardiston, who looked on free trade as treason to the commonwealth, and on the ballot as a device of Satan, was not perfectly *d'accord* with himself upon politics. The old gentleman was as chilling as a chaperone's "Good evening!" to an ineligible, and, of course, proceeded to bow us out with a good deal of grandiloquent bosh about his principles, which he was evidently very injured to think had not been too widely known to have prevented Fitz's intrusion. Fitz was non-plussed; his call did not promise to be very productive. The old Tory was unpropitious, and there was no sign of the girls whatever. He was just going to take his leave in despair, when, by Jove! as luck would have it, down came all at once such a shower of hailstones, such claps of thunder, such a conflict of the elements, as the

novelwriters say. that, out of common courtesy, the old boy, though it was plain to see that he looked on us as a brace of the most impudent scoundrels he had ever come across, was obliged to ask us if we would wait till it was over. Fitz thanked him, and said he would, in his pleasant, easy manner, as if he and the great Tory were the best possible friends; and (very stiffly, though,) Barnardiston, fairly let in for the entertainment of the dangerous skeptic and socialist, asked us to go into the drawing-room.

"Bravo! brass and pluck always win," whispered Fitz aside to me, as the door was opened, and we saw the identical Valencia feeding a brace of love-birds in the window, her sister, quite unlike her—a stout, square, business-looking girl—writing district papers, with a lot of tracts round her, and their mamma reading in a dormeuse.

Breathing an inward prayer for the continuance of the thunderstorm, Fitz sat himself down (just under the love-birds,) and proceeded to make himself agreeable—especially to the betrothed of the incumbent of St. Hildebrande's. You would have thought him the "enfant de la maison" for the last ten years at least, to hear him talk news and literature with madame, fun and ornithology with mademoiselle, utterly regardless that Barnardiston was keeping a gloomy silence, and the district collector looking glum on her sister's vivacious chat, probably with the eye of a belle-sœur to the absent Whitechurch's interests. He amused them so well, and was so well amused himself, that the sun had stared him in the face for full twenty minutes, and the birds were telling everybody the storm was gone, before Fitz thought proper to find out that it was "beginning to clear up"—a fact so undeniable that he had nothing for

it but to make his adieux, after offering to lend Mrs. Barnardiston some book or other she wanted; and when the lodge gates closed behind us, Fitz had a good shout of laughter.

"Now, then, Lady Fan, didn't I manage that gloriously?"

"Yes! I never doubted your powers of impudence yet; but whether your election——"

"Confound my election! It was worth losing fifty votes only to see that old boy's face when I asked for his support; and, by George! isn't she pretty? To see all that going to Whitechurch is rather a trial of one's patience. What in the world was she thinking of to throw herself away on him? A little flirtation will be only common humanity to her, poor girl! Did you see how mischievous she looked when she saw me? The 'good-for-nothing' was lurking in her mind, I bet you."

"In pleasant contrast with the good in everything of her future sposo. The cardinal virtues ain't relished by women."

Fitz laughed as he pricked Rumpunch into a gallop. "She's a dashing little thing; I must have some fun with her. I won't quite spoil her matrimonial speculations, though, for I shan't be inclined to put it au sérieux, like the Rev. Augustine. Fish out the young fellow, Fan; he's a Cambridge man; you can soon scrape acquaintance. Brothers are very useful sometimes, though occasionally uncommonly meddling and disagreeable. By Jove! look there. Confound it, there's Jimmy! What in the world is he doing here?"

"Hallo, 'old boy! how are you?" said the man thus apostrophised, Jimmy Villars, a chum of Fitz's. "I've heard lots about you, Randolph. You're turning Cantitborough upside down, and I'm come to help you?"

"That's right. Nobody more welcome. Where are you staying?"

"At the Levisons'—you know them. No? Then you shall immediately. Levison was a great yachting man. He's rangé and married now; a very pleasant girl hooked and finished him. They're county people and thorough-going Liberals, so you won't frighten 'em, though they *are* connected with that Arch-Blue old Barnardiston."

"By Jove!" thought Fitz, "'if a man takes luck by the horns, don't it always favor him!' Introduce me, then, Jimmy," he said, aloud; "I want a little fun. I'm bored to death with committees, canvassing, meetings, dinners, speechfying, and letter-writing. Then the Cantitburghers are such awful owls, and one's aims and ends do seem so small when one's mixed up with the bigotry of prejudice and the tomfoolery of party, that I'm growing heartily sick of the whole thing already."



III.

CUPID GIVES BEAU MORE TROUBLE THAN ALL THE BLUES.

POOR Beau was distracted. Fitz had been a refractory client enough before, so far as obstinately speaking his mind, telling the truth, tilting against his voters' opinions, and entirely refusing to butter anybody, went; but after he met Jimmy Villars, Beau had ten times more trouble, for while little Verdant was calling at every house and conquering them all with his title, and Le Hoop Smith was giving to all the charities, and quoting the "Christian Year" largely to the clergy, and giving a

new lectern to St. Hildebrand, and Salter was delighting the ten-pound men with coarse jokes, and flinging guineas and stout away recklessly, Fitz, ten to one, was either bothering poor Beau not to bribe, instead of letting things go on quietly; or talking rationalism and liberalism, high over the head of some startled constituent (who came off from the interview with the decision that Mr. Fitzhardinge was as eminently "dangerous" as O'Brien, and that he would give a plumper to Lord Verdant;) or playing billiards, and going eel-netting with Villars and the Levisons; or sitting in Edith Levison's drawing-room with her and her cousin, Valencia Barnardiston. Nevertheless, Beau, the sharpest-witted, neatest-handed agent that ever lived, worked on with the settled despair of a man baling water out of a leaking ship with a teacup, and really grew quite worried and anxious in his personal appearance, toiling for the devil-may-care Radical, for whom, ever since Fitz pounded him on their first introduction at Eton, he had always entertained a sort of dogged attachment, something, he used to say, like that of an aged grandmother for the "poor dear boy" who plagues her life out with crackers, and goes more wrong than all his brothers put together.

The Levisons were, as Jimmy had promised, very pleasant, and liked larks and fun as all pleasant people do; and as soon as we were introduced to them, made Fitz and me, and Beau too, if he had had time for such puerilities, welcome to Elm Court, Levison's place, just four miles from Cantitborough, whenever we liked to go there. We went pretty often, for Levison's wife was a merry little thing, and generally had one or two choice spirits like herself driven over to spend the day; among them, her cousin and favorite, the fiancée of the Rev. Augustine Whitechurch, a fat, slick man of large Easter

offerings, and touching testimonials; of good family, and wide (Cantitborough) fame, whom everybody praised, though nobody liked, as a sort of voucher for their own religion. I have seen a good many serpents and rabbits, rats and beagles, doves and tiger-cats chained together, but I never saw any pair who seemed to be more uncongenial than Valencia and her prétendu. She was lively, high-spirited, loved fun, parties, and mischief as much she hated Dorcas meetings, missionary reports, and interesting converted beggars, while he was Low Church—i. e. looked upon life as a miserable pilgrimage that it was our duty to make with the hardest possible peas in our shoes; wanted a wife the embodiment of that dreadful individual, Hannah More's "Lucilla," and worried poor little Val's very life out with animadversions on her pursuits, amusements, and friends. He came sometimes with her to Elm Court, where he had as chilling an effect as the inevitable rain on the swell Chiswick toilettes, and where he and Fitz took an instantaneous dislike to each other, and kept each other at bay like a cat and a spaniel. Val, though she was engaged, was the centre of attraction. Doesn't the green ticket "Sold" often make the dilettanti rave over a picture in the Royal Academy they might not have noticed without it? Jimmy Villars adored her, *en passant*; little Lord Verdant, whose paternal acres joined Levison's, bid fair to lose his silly little boyish head about her—no great loss, by the way; and Fitz—Fitz always made himself agreeable to any charming woman he came across, no more able to help it than Rover to help pointing when he scents a covey; and while the Great Blue was throwing his influence into the scale to worst the Radical candidate, the Radical candidate was tranquilly engaged in riding, singing, waltzing, and talking, three days out of the week, with

Miss Valencia, at Elm Court, where Levison, having been a very high match for his little niece Edith, Barnardiston thought it impossible for Val to come to any grief, and encouraged her visits despite Whitechurch's chagrin at them.

"Do you think you will win your election, Fitz?" asked Villars one evening after dining there, and we were strolling over the grounds afterwards in the twilight.

"Haven't an idea, my dear fellow," responded Fitz cheerfully, "and am not sure that I wish, for the Cantiburghers are such awful idiots, that to represent them faithfully I should be compelled to buy a pair of ass's ears, like Bottom, which might produce a peculiar sensation in the House."

"Especially," smiled Valencia, "as the cap would fit so many of its members."

"Those that are 'good for nothing' included," whispered Fitz, mischievously.

She laughed and colored.

"Oh, I had hoped you had not recognised me. What a shame to keep it perdu all this time. I might have been begging your pardon in a long oration every time we met. I shall take care how I talk to strangers again in a train."

"Pray don't. I'm exceptional in my taste, I know, but I do like truths sometimes, even if they hit hard. Don't you?"

"Yes; but I fancy my truths didn't hit you severely at all. I think I told you you were condemned as a skeptic, a socialist, and a republican; and, since all great men have been classed into one of the three, you should be super-excellent to combine the trio."

Fitz laughed.

"I am quite content to be condemned by Cantitborough to any amount, so long as *you* don't find me utterly good for nothing."

She looked up at him merrily.

"Certainly; you are good for waltzing, billiards, and German songs; those are all the duties I require of you, so I don't ask any further."

"I only wish you required more," said Fitz, softly. "I am sorry you think of me as a passing acquaintance" chatted with in a ball-room, and parted from without regret, to meet no more in the eddies of society."

"I never said that I considered you so," interrupted Valencia, hurriedly, snapping the roses off their stems as they walked along.

"But you implied it; and if you knew the pain your light words cause, you would not speak them."

She was silent, so was he. It was part of Fitz's code of warfare to leave his sentences to bear their fruit.

"Valencia, you are extremely imprudent to be out in this damp atmosphere in such a light evening dress," said the Rev. Augustine at her elbow.

"This exquisite evening! Thank you for your care, but I don't belong to the sanitary-mad individuals," replied Valencia, impatiently, "I never cloak up, so never take cold; if I do, I will apply to you for some of those extraordinary little hundreds and thousands you carry in the morocco case, and physic the parish with, in alternate doses of texts and globules."

There was a sarcastic curl on Miss Val's lips which the popular preacher did not quite relish, for he was an apostle of that arch-humbag homœopathy, firmly believed in a "millionth part;" in its strength being increased by dilution; in the virtue of infinitesimal doses, and all the rest of it; and was keenly alive to any ridi-

cule on the point, as people are when a point is untenable.

"Ah! *do* you believe in those little comfits, Mr. Whitechurch?" said Fitz, taking up the warfare. "You save the souls and the bodies *en même temps*—a very nice arrangement, I dare say. It must be delightful to practise the two healing arts at once; and then, if you *should* ever chance to mistreat a case, it wouldn't so much matter, because you'd have made sure your patient was "fit to die, whether he was willing or not. Homœopathy's a capital thing for trade. I'm very glad to see it spreading; they say the undertakers bid fair to be some of the wealthiest men in the kingdom through it, and the sugar-bakers thrive amazingly. You saw in the paper the other day—didn't you?—that one of 'em gave the quantity of little hundreds and thousands—some ton weight, I think—he had made for one of your great homœopaths—your men who buy a diploma for twenty pounds in Germany, and set up here with a tiger and a practice as minute as their pet medicine, and knowledge as infinitesimal as the power of their doses."

"It requires no wit to jest upon deep subjects," said Whitechurch, loftily. "The holiest topic, the gravest matter, can of course be turned into ridicule."

"If it is weak, certainly," returned Fitz, with a calm, courteous air.

"No, sir!" said the pet parson, pompously. "Not if it is weak, but if its opponents are bigoted and coarse-mouthed. Ridicule was thrown upon Moses's divining-rod——"

"And he turned it into a serpent, and made it eat up all the other rods, which was ingenious, if not Christian," said Fitz, wickedly.

"I refuse to discuss such subjects in such a tone,"

returned Whitechurch, with extreme severity. "Homœopathy is a great, enlightened, rational, and noble discovery in science, and does not require any defence."

"It can't make any," murmured Fitz.

Whitechurch turned from him with immeasurable disdain.

"My dear Valencia allow me to say you are exceedingly unwise not to wear some hat, or cloak, or something warmer than that flimsy dress. Careful wrapping——"

"Is always followed by weak health," laughed Valencia. "We know what the Sybarites were, and the English will be as bad if they wrap up their children, and diet and frighten themselves, as that estimable lady in *Two-pence a Week* is so fond of advising."

"But old maids' children are proverbial," laughed Fitz. "Of all mortals do I pity most an unlucky small in the clutches of a well-meaning, anxious maiden aunt, who is primed with prescriptions, won't let him stir out if there's no 'ozone' in the air, or a breath of north wind; measures his warm young blood by her own chill veins, and loads him with flannel like a gouty old man. Pretty mess she'll make of him! If it's a boy, he'll go down under the first breath of east wind; and if it's a girl, she'll grow up an invalid, good for nothing, a misery to herself and everybody else, with neither color in her cheeks nor use in her limbs."

Valencia laughed, and her glance compared, disparagingly enough to the clergyman, Fitz's sinewy, vigorous frame, which would have lifted ten stone like a feather, with the fat, sleek, feminine, puffy form of the popular preacher, as she answered,

"We should soon see an end to the hardy, strong-muscled, sport-loving Britons. People now-a-days study sanitary rules till they study all their health away. I confess

I've no patience with those lady dictators, such as that strong-minded political economist who writes such awful advice from her 'Farm of Three Inches.' Wants us to leave off high heels—I wonder what for?—and wear wretched, poking straw bonnets, so that nobody can see our faces, (convenient to those who have faces that won't bear looking at, I dare say,) and would squeeze all romance out of everything, and would sweep all beauty off the earth if she could. Why mayn't we have a pretty thing, if it isn't useful? Our eyebrows are no particular use, but we should look very funny without them."

"I quite agree with you; I hate utilitarians. It is your oracle from the 'Farm' who laments the sensual tendencies of schoolboys because they like rabbit suppers and tuck. I wouldn't give much for a boy who didn't. Those very spiritual individuals are nasty ones to deal with; they're so exalted themselves, they have no sympathy with one's natural weaknesses, and as they pretend to go in for no errors themselves, of course won't pity them in other people."

"We are to condemn errors, not to sympathise with them," snapped Whitechurch.

"Indeed!" said Fitz, carelessly. "When I find a man free from all errors himself, I'll let him find fault with another—and I shan't chance on *him* for many a year."

The clergyman smiled—not pleasantly.

"All the borough are acquainted with your latitudinarian opinions, Mr. Fitzhardinge."

"Are they?" laughed Fitz. "They must be rather a treat to Cantitborough, after all the conservative oratory it has expended on it. By the way, Mr. Whitechurch, that election sermon of yours last Sunday was an admirable hit. I heard Lord Cockadoodle say that he wished

old Ewen would kick off and leave Dunslop in his gift."

Whitechurch colored. The sermon was a gross piece of toadyism, and though he did keep his affections on things above, he couldn't help sometimes taking a glance downwards, where the fat living of Dunslope was among the prominent points that caught his eye.

Valencia sighed quickly, turned round, and said something about going into the house.

"Do," said Fitz, bending towards her. "Let us go and try those German airs."

Go they did, and Fitz's cornet, which he played as well as Koenig, sent out its mellow notes in a concert of sweet sounds, which was anything but harmonious to the ears of the incumbent of St. Hildebrande, as he walked up and down before the drawinig-room windows, listening to Caroline, who, regarding him already as a brother, took the liveliest interest in his parochial business affairs, doubtless with the kindly view of covering her sister's short-comings in that line.

"Poor dear Valencia!" I heard her sigh, as she passed me when I was smoking on the terrace with Jimmy. "Don't be annoyed with her, Augustine. She *does* flirt a little, perhaps; but they say all pretty women do. I'm not tempted, you know; I am plain and unpretending; but, thank Heaven! my thoughts are not fixed on this world, or on men's idle admiration. Don't be vexed with her; she is thoughtless, I am afraid."

"But I am extremely annoyed," said the parson's dictatorial tones. "I spoke to her the other day about fixing the time for our marriage. I require a wife; I cannot attend to the schools, and the cook wastes a great deal; but she put me off—would give me no answer. I am not to be treated so lightly; and as for her dancing, and sing-

ing, and riding with those idle men, especially with that wild, dissolute Fitzhardinge, it is intolerable, unbearable, most indecorous——”

“I know it is very sad,” chimed in the gentle Cary. “But dear Val never had any due sense of the responsible position your wife will occupy. She is careless, worldly——”

Here they went out of hearing, and I was no further enlightened, but went into the drawing-room, where they were all playing *vingt-et-un*, and called me to join them: and I thought, as I saw Valencia, got up very becomingly, with her large hazel eyes full of animation and fun, Verdant gazing at her sentimentally on her left, and Fitz discoursing with eloquent glances, and facile compliment, on her right, her light laugh ringing through the room, and her merry talk keeping all going, that it was a thousand pities for her to be imprisoned in the sombre atmosphere of St. Hildebrande’s rectory, under the cheerless régime of St. Hildebrande’s incumbent, whose gloomy doctrine would infallibly silence the laughter, hush-hush the jest, burn the cards, interdict the waltzing—in short, crush all the native song out of the poor bird he had netted.

“I say, old boy,” said I, when we were having a pipe that night in the dining-room at Hollywood, “make hay while the sun shines; you won’t have much longer to flirt.”

“Why not?” said Fitz, sharply.

“Because Whitechurch wants to get married; not from any particular penchant for the state, or any fresh accès of love, but because his girls’ schools want looking after, and his cook’s ruining him.”

“The fool!” ejaculated Fitz, with a giant cloud of Cavendish; “why doesn’t he go to the register-office and hire a seamstress and a housekeeper?”

"Possibly because a wife will combine both, and be cheaper. Barnardiston will give his daughters ten thousand pounds each if he like his sons-in-law. Fancy Valencia arming herself with needles and thread, and teaching half a dozen charity-girls to make pocket-handkerchiefs for Ojibbeways, and going into her kitchen to see that dear Augustine's curry is peppered to a T, or that the cook doesn't encourage the policeman——"

"Faugh! Be quiet, can't you?" growled Fitz, in intense disgust. "You might talk with just as much coolness of Rumpunch being set to run in a costermonger's cart. The idea of the girl throwing herself away on that white-chokered humbug! What on earth could make her accept him?"

"First offer," interrupted Beau; "couldn't tell she'd get another."

"Pooh! nonsense; at her age girls ain't hard up in that way. If she were thirty she might have been desperate; very rusty hooks are snapped up when there's no longer a chance of silver ones, but at nineteen——"

"Hooks of all kinds are snapped at by all ages," interrupted Beau again, "and you've said so scores of times, Fitz, when it suited you, and your perceptions weren't clouded. Women are always mad to be married. Heaven knows why they trouble themselves to tell the girls at the end of the marriage service not to be afraid, with any amazement; there never was more needless waste of words, for I never knew any of the crinolines who didn't catch at a wedding-ring as Rover catches at a mutton-bone."

Fitz was quiet, puffing away with as much energy as if he were smoking Whitechurch, as Bugeaud smoked the Algerines.

"It does puzzle me, though," said I, "how Val, with

the pick of the county, could choose that parson. She don't like him, I fancy."

"Like him!" cried Fitz, with immeasurable scorn, "How should she? An ugly brute, with the pluck of a chicken, and as sour as beer after a thunderstorm!"

"Don't call your spiritual pastors and masters bad names, Fitz," said Beau. "You keep me in hourly terror, for if you have a row with the Cantitburghers' pet preacher, it'll be all up with your election."

"I shan't have a row with him," sneered Fitz, with much contempt. "I flirt with her because she amuses me, but if she likes the parson, she's welcome to him for me."

Though she was so very welcome to him, I heard Fitz in his room (the room is next to mine, and the walls are lath and plaster,) mutter to himself, as he undressed, "What the devil does she tie herself to that fool for?" a question to which I do not suppose either his pipe, or his bed-candle, or Rover, who always sleeps by his bedside, or the harvest moon that was looking through the window, vouchsafed him any reply.

IV.

THE RADICAL CANDIDATE BEATS THE POPULAR PREACHER OUT
OF THE FIELD.

THE Larches was, of course, forbidden ground to Fitz. He did call there with the book for Mrs. Barnardiston, and was received very cordially by that lady, but in the evening received a note from the old Tory thanking him

for his courtesy, but saying that at least until the "coming important contest" was decided, he thought acquaintance, since their opinions were so opposite, had better not continue. That was a settler; Fitz, with all the brass in the kingdom, could not push himself in after that, especially as Fitz would not make himself cheap for a kingdom. Nevertheless, sometimes when Valencia was not at Elm Court, he would find occasion to ride past the Larches, Valencia being given to amateur gardening, which generally consisted in gathering the flowers, or throwing guelder roses at Dauphin, and a very pretty sight she was when she was so occupied, though Caroline considered it childish, and Whitechurch waste of time. By Jove! if one may not dawdle a little time on the road gathering the flowers one finds in life—and precious few there are!—what earthly use, I wonder, do the flowers grow there for? Past the Larches we were riding one evening after dinner, having spent all day in election business that had bored us both to death, and very slowly was Rumpunch pacing under the shadow of the shrubberies that divided the stronghold of "Blue" opinion from the high road. Just opposite a break in the laburnums and hawthorns that gave a view through a white gate into the garden, Rumpunch had, or was supposed to have a nasty stone in his foot—a stone that a man who adored horseflesh as Fitz did was bound to look after. The stone took some moments to find—indeed I am uncertain that it *was* found after all—but while Fitz was examining the off hoof, through the trees we perceived Whitechurch and his fiancée. Whitechurch looked more pompous than usual, and the serene brow that the ladies of his parish raved about was certainly contracted. Val looked excited, and rather ready to cry. They drew near the gate, not being able to see us for the trees, and we caught

the clergyman's last words—very stiff and icy they were, too.

"You will think over what I have said, Valencia, and I expect you to pay some attention to it. Good night."

And Augustine bent his head over his stiff choker, and touched Val's forehead with his lips in as cool a sort of manner as a man kisses a plain sister. Valencia gave not the slightest response. Whitechurch swung the gate open and passed down the road with his back to us. Val stood still with her eyes on the ground, in a reverie; then she caught Dauphin up, kissed him, burst into tears as she bent over the dog, and walked away through the trees. I glanced at Fitz. His teeth were set like a mastiff's, and he looked after Whitechurch as if he longed to deliver from his left shoulder, and floor the retreating figure.

"Very paternal, wasn't he?" said I. "You'd have improved the occasion better than that, Fitz."

"Curse the fellow!" muttered the Radical candidate. "I just wish I had him out for a couple of rounds on a quiet morning—a hypocritical idiot, that'll worry all her young life out of her."

With which disconnected remark, and sundry smothered curses, the sight of the farewell having seemingly stirred him into mighty wrath, Fitz sprang on Rumpunch, and tore over the roads at a pace fit to win the Grand Military. When he got home he vented it in pipes and whisky, and Beau looked at him as a man might look on a pet hound, that he feared was going in for hydrophobia.

"Something's come to Fitz," said Beau anxiously, "for he's just signed me a 1000*l.* check without a word; and I know he wouldn't have given it to me to corrupt the people with without some bother, if he'd known what he was doing."

"I'm going over to Levison's, Beau," said he at breakfast next day. "We're to drive over to the Chase, for a sketching party; will you come?"

"I?" growled Beau. "I should think I've something better to do; if I hadn't, the figure at your poll would be an O. The idea of a man's coming down to stand for a borough, and then going spending all his time with a set of women! I've no patience with you, Randolph."

"Haven't you, old fellow?" laughed Fitz. "Patience is a virtue, and as no lawyer has any virtues at all, I suppose we can't wonder at you. I did begin enunciating my opinions, but you stopped my mouth."

"Opinions! Pray what have they to do with an election?" retorted Beau. "One would take you for a boy of twenty, talking as if you didn't know everything going on on the face of the earth was an affair of pounds, shillings, and pence. Who the devil cares two straws what opinions you have? Can't you keep 'em quiet, if you will have such things? They hinder a man shockingly. If he's a taste for 'em, he should lock 'em up in his study. You want to get returned——"

"Don't care a hang about it," cried Fitz.

"For Cantitborough?" continued Beau, too irate to mind the interruption; "and if you do, you should make up your mind to give your money to me and Waring with your eyes shut, as a verger takes a Christmas-box, and to put the stopper for a time on all that liberalist and rationalist stuff. It's all very sensible, when shared with the esprits forts; but it don't sell just now—it must wait another century or two. If you want to get on with the world, you mustn't frighten it by drawing Truth out of her well; for the world at present is a very great baby, and truth is its boggy, and makes it run away. But you're as wilful as an unbroke colt, and one might as

well talk to this reindeer tongue as to you. So get along to your sketching party; you're out of mischief there, if you don't make love to Whitechurch's bride, and raise the hue and cry after you, with old Blue Bar springing the rattle."

With which oration, delivered with the spurt of a champagne cork, Beau pushed his plate away, drank a glass of Bass, and ordered the dog-cart to drive into the town, while his obstinate client put his block and his moist-color box in his pocket, and took his cap to walk over to Elm Court. A nicer place to flirt in than that Chase, with its soft turfy seats, and its thick shadowy woodlands, and its picturesque distance, as an excuse for sketching, it was impossible to find. Fitz was very great at sketching; he made a sketching tour once with one of the "Associates," but to-day I fancy the outline of Dauphin's nose was all he achieved, for he was chiefly busy mixing Miss Val's colors, fetching her water, telling her how to tone down this, and deepen that, till—Well, I didn't envy the Reverend Augustine, as his fiancée sat at the roots of an old beech, a little apart from the rest of us, with Fitz lying at full length on the turf beside her, as handsome a dog as ever turned a girl's head with his pretty speeches.

Valencia was very shy and quiet with him that day; she, who generally talked nineteen to the dozen, and was always ready for any lark. I was listening to the "Princess," which Jimmy Villars was reading aloud to Mrs. Levison and another fair one, but it really did bore me to such a degree that I was obliged to sneak out of sound to where I could light a pipe without offending female nerves. I was near Fitz, who was smoking—permitted the indulgence by Valencia, who has no nonsense about her—and I caught the end of his sentence as he lay

looking up at her, and gathering the ferns with his left hand. Fitz has a quiet way of flirting, but it's a very effective one.

"No; I don't wish to get the election," he was saying. "My views have changed since I came down here."

"What! has Cantitborough air turned you Blue?" laughed Valencia, with her customary gaiety.

"Not exactly; but since, when I leave Cantitborough, I shall be forgotten as a *passagère* acquaintance by those who have made the place dear to me, I shall never set foot in it again, which I must do were I to become its representative. Isn't it old North, in the 'Noctes,' who says 'there are places in this earth that we shudder to revisit, haunted by images too beautiful to be endured?' I feel the truth of that now."

"By George!" thought I, "Fitz is growing very serious. Won't poor little Val credit it all, and never dream it will be talked in the same strain to some new flirtation next month!"

"Will you give me that sketch?" Fitz went on, after a pause, in which the ferns had come to considerable grief. "It is not much to ask, but I should like some memorial of days that I shall never forget, though you will."

"Do you think I shall ever forget them?" began Valencia, passionately; then stopped short, bending her head over her drawing.

The temptation to revenge yesterday's scene was too sweet to be resisted. Fitz put his arm round her waist, and drew her down towards him. "Will you promise me that you will not——"

But Valencia sprang up, scattering her materials to the four winds; her face was flushed, and her voice agitated. "Hush, hush, you must not speak so to me; you do not know——"

What he didn't know never appeared, for Edith Levison turned her head over her shoulder, saying,

"Val, darling, have you any ultramarine? I can't find mine."

Val went towards her, and Fitz rose with a worried, anxious look on his face, very different to the fun his love affairs generally brought him.

"Why did your cousin engage herself to Mr. Whitechurch?" asked Fitz, point-blank, of Mrs. Levison, finding himself alone with her for two minutes before dinner that night.

"Ah! isn't it a pity?" cried Edith plaintively; "a dreadful man like that, who'll think it sinful for her to waltz or go to the Opera. If Gerald wouldn't let me waltz, or have a box, I would sue for a divorce to-morrow. It's shameful, isn't it?"

"But why accept him?" said Fitz impatiently.

"That was all my uncle's doing," answered Edith. "He's terribly mean, you know, without the slightest reason to be so. Valencia came home from school at seventeen. Augustine thought her very pretty, (clergymen are *not* above those weaknesses,) and proposed for her. My uncle thought it a good match, and ordered her to accept him; her mamma begged her not to go against her papa. Poor little Val, as thoughtless as my canary bird, never knew the misery she was making for herself, and consented. She has been miserable ever since, poor child! They've been engaged two years; and," continued Edith with immense energy, "oh! Mr. Fitzhardinge, I'd as soon see her joining the poor Clares as wearing orange-blossoms for that pompous, bigoted Whitechurch."

So would Fitz, probably, on the well-known principle of the dog in the manger; a very natural principle, espe-

cially when one has a fancy to eat the straw oneself. He did not say so, however, but leaned against a console in profound silence, while Edith whispered, as Valencia came into the room, "I shouldn't be surprised if my uncle broke off the engagement now, for he thinks Verdant is in love with her, as, indeed, he is, poor boy, and the peer's robes are better than the priest's."

Whitechurch came to dine that night at Elm Court. The dinner was not so lively as usual, for Fitz and Valencia, generally the fastest hitters in the tennis-ball of conversation, might have been Gog and Magog set down at the table for any amusement they afforded the society. Whitechurch, too, looked more glum and self-sufficient than ever, and Jimmy Villars whispered to me, "that one might as well ask the terrace statues in the garden to dinner as a trio of lovers and rivals, for any company that they were."

After dinner at Elm Court we were wont to take our cigars about in the grounds instead of over the wine in the glorious sultry August evenings. Levison went after his wife—he was still dreadfully spoony about her—Fitz lighted a Havana and strolled off by himself, and Jimmy and I sat down in a Robinson Crusoe hut to have a chat about the Cambridge Eight, the October meetings, and other subjects we had in common. Villars was just telling me how it was that Long Fortescue happened to make such a pot of money on the Cesarewitch, when, through the thick shrubs and young trees that surrounded our smoking-room, I caught a glimpse of Valencia's pink dress, as she stood in earnest talk with somebody or other, invisible to us.

"Oh! hang it, Jimmy," said I, "there's another love-scene going on; let's get out of the way."

"Keep still, young one, rather," retorted Villars, "or

you may just walk into the middle of it, and smash all the fun. Is it that dear little pet, and Fitz making a fool of himself about her? It's horridly dirty to listen, but, boxed up here, one can't help it. Fitz would shoot us if we walked out in his face and spoiled sport. Besides, we shan't hear anything new; love-scenes are all alike."

This, however, seemed far from being a love-scene. Valencia was speaking impetuously and hurriedly. "I have acted very wrongly, I know I have. A girl always does, if she engages herself where she cannot give her affection. I beg your pardon for having misled you. I blame myself very much for not having spoken frankly to you long ago, and asked you to release me from an engagement I can never fulfil."

"It is a pity you did not think so long ago," replied Whitechurch, sententiously.

"It *is* a pity. I wish to Heaven I had," cried poor little Val.

"I dare say you do, since you have seen your favorite reprobate, Mr. Fitzhardinge," smiled the pastor. "You say very justly that we are ill suited to each other; our tastes, and aims and pursuits are utterly alien. I was lured, I confess, by your personal attractions. I trusted that the good seed, once sown, might flourish in so fair a soil; but I was deceived. You have only forestalled me in the rupture of our engagement. I confess that I dared not take a helpmate out of Philistia, and I have learnt that there are treasures elsewhere superior to the ephemeral charms of mere exterior beauty."

"I am rejoiced to hear it," retorted Val, rather haughtily. "Our want of congeniality cannot have struck you more forcibly than it has done me. You will, at least, do me the justice to admit that I never simulated an affection I could not feel."

"Certainly; we part in peace, and shall, I trust, meet again on perfectly friendly terms," returned Whitechurch, with doubly pompous self-consciousness to cover his inward mortification.

"He'll take Cary, mark my word," said Villars, as the incumbent of St. Hildebrande's took the tips of his late fiancée's fingers, raised his hat, and left her. "All her district visiting and ragged school teaching hasn't been without an eye to business, I'll bet."

Valencia, fancying herself alone, threw herself down on a turf seat under a mountain ash, looking pretty enough, with the sunset lighting up her bright dress and uncovered hair, while she sat in thought out of which Dauphin, by the application of a cold nose, the wagging of a short tail, and many impatient barks, vainly tried to rouse her.

"Deucedly nice she looks, don't she?" whispered Villars. "Do for the Sleeping Beauty, if her eyes were shut. Why don't Fitz come and play the Knight's part?"

He'd scarcely spoken when the scent of a Havana came to us on the evening wind, and along the shrubbery path came Fitz, with his arms folded, and his eyes on the ground. Dauphin ran up to him in an ecstatic state of welcome. Valencia started up, her cheeks flushing as bright-hued as the sky, and said something highly unintelligible about its going to rain, which, seeing there wasn't a cloud in the heavens, seemed looking very far into futurity indeed. Fitz didn't answer her with regard to her atmospheric prophecies, but, throwing away his cigar into the middle of an oleander, he began where he had left off in the morning, caught both her hands, drew her to him, and kissed her, *sans cérémonie*.

"By Jove! that's rather too much for a man's charity,"

growled Villars. "Master Randolph knows how to do the thing, don't he?"

"Valencia, my love, my darling," murmured Fitz, too earnestly for it to be a flirtation any longer, "I beseech you listen to me. It will kill me to see you thrown away on that idiot. I would do him some mischief before I let him win you, or saw him touch your very hand again. I seem never to have hated or to have loved till now. For Heaven's sake free yourself from those accursed ties, and give yourself to me——"

"The deuce!" muttered Jimmy, when Valencia had whispered that she was free, and the Radical candidate had pledged himself with every vow under the sun to the great Blue's daughter, and they had strolled away among the shrubberies, "since Fitz has got up the steam and come it au sérieux like this, a spavined 'bus horse may enter itself for the Derby. A pretty fellow he is to come canvassing; but one might have been sure what sort of an election *he'd* try for when hazel eyes like those were in the way."

I suppose Fitz found this style of canvassing more to his taste, for the harvest moon was high in the heavens, and the nightingale was jug-jugging in the cool woodlands, and Edith had sung two or three songs after the coffee, before he and Valencia walked in through the bay-window, he looking calmly triumphant, and she excitedly happy, as if they really thought a fusion of Blue and Yellow the easiest thing in the world.

V.

FITZ WINS ONE ELECTION AND LOSES ANOTHER.

To see Beau's face when Fitz told him he had turned out Whitechurch, and was going to marry Valencia him-

self, was as good a bit of fun as to see Mathews's "Patter versus Clatter."

"Well, I *do* think you're gone clean mad, Randolph," he began, when he recovered his first breathless horror. "To fly in the face of the borough like that—to steal their pet parson's fiancée—to outwit their most influential householder—to get yourself called every name they can lay their tongues to,—how the deuce do you think that's likely to forward your election?"

Fitz lay back and laughed without stopping for five minutes.

"You may laugh," growled Beau. "You won't laugh when you see two thousand five hundred pounds six shillings and eightpence gone, and nothing to show for it."

"That's your fault," put in Fitz, "for spending such a lot on unholy purposes. What sort of face would you show in the Court of Inquiry?"

"I should like to know," continued Beau, more furious every word he uttered, "what a bit of girl is worth to lose an election for? Girls are as cheap as green peas, but you won't find free boroughs as easy to come by. A pretty row we shall have in the town! Won't the Blues print placards about you! Won't there just be choice epithets chalked after your name on the walls! Won't the *Cantitborough Post* catch hold of it, and rake up every one of your love affairs; and pretty nice ones some of 'em are, as I know, since I was called in to settle 'em! Won't old Blue Bar move heaven and earth to keep you out! Well, all I can say is, that you're more fit for a private asylum than a rational hustings."

With which final philippic Beau flung out of the room, too irate to hear Fitz call after him:

"Take my compliments to the editor of the *Cantitborough Post*, and ask him to be so kind as to print, next

week, in the biggest capitals he has, that I consider a touch of Valencia's little soft lips worth the premiership! Don't forget, Beau! And, I say, you may add, too, that Blue and Yellow are two of the primary colors, and intended to unite from earliest memory."

Beau was quite right: the town, *i. e.* the ladies—for Cantitborough was petticoat-governed—were mad with Valencia, because they had long privately adored Fitz, and Whitechurch was still in the market, and therefore to be sided with. The Blues were frantic with delight at being able to damage the Yellow member, who, somehow, had been making ground in spite of them; and Barnardiston, of course, was furious, not because Whitechurch was thrown over, for Whitechurch had turned his affections towards the good working qualities of Caroline, but because the man he hated worst in the whole county—handsome, reckless, bold republican Fitz—had cheated him out of the chance of a coronet. The very day Valencia accepted Randolph she refused little Lord Verdant, and so enraged was the great Tory, that he told Valencia to leave his roof, and sent Fitz's letters back unopened. Poor Val, who, having her mamma on her side, however, did not mind it so much, took refuge with Edith Levison, Levison himself being indignant with Barnardiston for his folly and ill-bred opposition to a match so much better than the one first looked for; and in the sultry summer days and the long summer evenings Fitz and Val passed many a pleasant hour under the shady trees of Elm Court, while in the little bigoted, quarrelling, peppery town four miles off, the Cantitborough men were blackening his name in committee-rooms, and the Cantitborough women were pulling her to smithereens at their tea-fights.

. The day that beats the Derby for stirring English

phlegm into mad excitement—the day when Blue and Yellow rise rampant against each other—the day when the demon of Party breaks loose, when the Unwashed smash each other's heads to their full satisfaction, when voters are locked up in durance vile and plied with hocussed grog, and torn hither and thither by distracted cabs—when men work, and wear, and quarrel, and growl, and swear by a bit of blue ribbon as if it were the sole stay of the country, and grasp at a yellow banner as though it were the mainstay of liberty—the election-day dawned on Cantitborough, the sun shining extra bright, as if laughing with its jolly round face at the baby play these little pigmies below fancied of such universal importance.

The nomination-day arrived, and each separate Cantitburgher uprose from his bed with the solemn conviction that the destinies of England hung on his own individual hands. Beau splashed through his bath with the rapidity of a water-dog, brushed his whiskers as hastily as a Cantab too late for chapel, and dressed himself in much the same eager excitement as a Coronet harnessing for his first parade.

“Seven o'clock, and that fellow not up!” growled Beau, performing a fanfaronade on his candidate's door.

“What the devil are you making that row for?” responded Fitz. “Why *can't* you take things quietly?”

“If I had, I wonder how you'd stand,” swore Beau, “on the poll to-day! Not up! when Smith, and Salter, and Verdant will be in the town by nine full fig, and all your committee will be looking out for you at half-past at the 'Ten Bells!’”

Fitz laughed.

“You and Fan go and get your breakfast, and go into Cantitborough, whether I'm up or not. And, I say,

Beau, send Soames to me, and order some one to saddle Rumpunch, will you?"

"Go into Cantitborough without *him*! He's certainly mad," muttered Beau, in soliloquy. Being, however, of a philosophic turn of mind, he and I ate a good breakfast, though ungraced by the presence of our host. "Why is that fellow so late?" said Beau fifty times to each cup of coffee. "Eight o'clock, by Jove! and we shall be a mortal hour getting into procession and going to the town. Do ring the bell, Fan—ring it loud Thank you. James, go and see if your master is up."

"Can't make anybody hear, sir," said James, returning

"Not hear? Bless my soul, it's very extraordinary!" said Beau, looking the picture of unutterable worry and woe. "Fitz must have taken an overdose of opium. Confound him! what did he get in love for? I'll call him myself." Up went Beau and battered at the door, with not the slightest success. "I say, Fitz! Fitz! are you deaf, or dead, or what?" shouted Beau, forgetting that in the event of either hypothesis Fitz would be the last person calculated to give him an answer. "God bless me!" cried Beau, bursting the door open, "where *are* you? If ever there was a wayward, obstinate, provoking——" Beau stopped in astonishment too great for speech. The room was empty, the bed empty, Fitz, Rover, and Soames departed, all the drawers open, a portmanteau on the floor, and shirts, and coats, and brushes, and boots tossed about as when a man has packed in a hurry and left behind all the things he did not want. "Bolted, by Heaven!" cried Beau. "Where's he gone? What's he done? He is mad—he must be mad! Send the servants off everywhere! Where, in the devil's name, can he be flown? Oh, curse it, Fan, what is to be done?"

That was more than I could tell him. We did send the men everywhere, but they could not find their master, nor Soames either. Beau had a faint idea of dragging the pond, in case Val had jilted him, and Fitz had thrown himself into a watery grave; but then it was not probable that Soames was immolated as well. Nine o'clock struck; there were the Yellow men with the Yellow banners, and the Yellow ribbons, and the Yellow band, and yet no candidate. My father, who would have been there, had been all along too ill to take any part in the election, and this very nomination-day was chained to his room with his old foe—gout. In that half-hour I am sure poor Beau lost as much flesh as a jockey before the Derby. "Well, we must go," said he, in sheer desperation. "Perhaps he'll turn up in the town; if not, we must tell 'em he's seriously ill. By George! I wish he'd been at York before he brought me on such a fool's errand."

Into Cantitborough we rode, with many shouts and enthusiastic rushes out from the cottages we passed; and into the market-place we went with great row and glory, save that we were a procession without a head. There was little Verdant, meeker than ever after Valencia's rejection, looking like a noodle, with his father and a galaxy of titles at the head of his procession; and there was Le Hoop Smith, bland and smiling, at the head of his; and fat, yellow old Salter at the head of his. And where was Fitz—the handsome, dashing Fitz, whom the women were crowded to admire and the mob to cheer?—at the head of *his*, that gorgeous Yellow display which, thanks to untiring Beau, was grown popular even in Blue Cantitborough? And when the Blues saw not Rumpunch and his rider, were they not frantic with triumph? and were not Fitz's committee in an agony of wonder and

dread, and the women in a state of bemoaning agony and woe, and the mob in a frantic fit of excitement and indignation, after the custom of mobs from all ages downwards? And was not Beau—poor Beau—distracted in his own mind, and worried like a fox with fifty packs after him—more inimitably cool, and confident, and matchless, than any man could possibly be pictured, when he set the mayor's hair straight upon end with an account of the frightful attack of cholera that had seized poor Fitz in the morning; distracted the committee with assurances that he had left their candidate as blue as the lapis lazuli ring on his finger, and in mortal danger of his life; appealed so touchingly to the enlightened men of Cantitborough not to allow the unfortunate invalid's cause to be injured; and conducted himself altogether so brilliantly, that the Blues whispered in knots in dismay?

Yes, Beau was magnificent that day. I confess, though, he did push me aside as a thundering muff when I made a mistake, and told one of the committee my brother had broken his ankle the night before—yes, Beau was glorious, I admit. The proceedings began with the crier's bell and the mayor's oration, which was entirely unheard from calls from the crowd of "Go it, old Baldhead!" "Speak up, old Malt-and-Hops!" "How many nine gallons did Salter order?" and like personal allusions to his occupation. Then uprose old Barnardiston, who was not very cordially received, for the simple reason that he was the hardest magistrate on the bench; however, the Blues cheered him to the skies when he proposed as a fitting representative for the free, loyal, honorable, enlightened, and all the rest of it, borough, the son of the noble and generous House of Cockadoodle, the benefactors and patrons of Cantitborough. After his seconder came two out-and-out Blues, who proposed the

gentle and intellectual Le Hoop Smith, of Hooping Hall Pottleshire; and two more, who put forward that public spirited, benevolent, and large-hearted gentleman, Curry Salter, late of the Bengal Infantry; and then two Liberals arose, in a wild storm of mad cheers and savage yells, to offer to the borough, as a member, Randolph Fitzhardinge, Esq., of Hollywood and Evansdale, who had been most unhappily stricken down by illness at the very moment he was mounting his horse, to come and have the honor of addressing them in person. And now up got little Beau, as plucky as a game cock, and began to tell them how it was that he was compelled to take their candidate's place. So ingeniously did he apologise for Fitz; so delightfully did he set the crowd screaming at his witticisms; so mercilessly did he show up his opponents' weak points; so admirably did he describe Fitz's opinions much better than Fitz would have done himself, who would have talked Plato and frightened them with his daring; so pathetically did he implore them not to let the great Liberal cause be prejudiced by an unavoidable accident, that the mob cheered him, as if he had been the Queen and they Etonians, hurraed for Fitzhardinge till their throats were hoarse, and even some determined Blues were caused to waver in their minds. The hands clad in French kid, doeskin, silk, cachemire, or dirt, as it might chance, that lifted themselves out from the tumultuous sea of shouting, struggling, fighting Blues and Yellows, were declared in favor of Lord Verdant and Randolph Fitzhardinge! Beau's triumph was magnificent, it smashed hollow all the mural crowns that ever were manufactured; and it was worth a guinea to see him in it, mercurial as quicksilver, rapid as a champagne cork, sharp as a ferret on his foes and winning as a widow bent on conquest to his

friends, haranguing these, arguing with those, thanking a fat councilman, and pledging a thin churchwarden, talking up for the Queen and down for the Pope, agreeing with everybody and offending none, telling them poor Fitz was Prussian Blue when he left him, and rapidly progressing towards Indigo, but had now taken a favorable turn, as he had just heard by a messenger, thanks be to, &c. &c.

Yes, Beau was grand on that day, and never more effective than when, at twelve o'clock at night, having shaken the last hand, and drunk the last glass, and talked the last solemn talk with the solemn committee, he sprang on his horse in the Ten Bells yard to tear over to Hollywood to see how his poor friend was. He had just his foot in the stirrup, and I was on my hack, receiving no end of condolences for my brother's most ill-timed attack from three or four of the principal of the committee, when a hand was laid on my knee, and an awful voice, which I knew only too well, said, in tones the fac-simile of the first tragedian's at the Royal Grecian,

"Mr. Francis Fitzhardinge, you are a scoundrel and a liar!"

"Hallo!" said I, "mild language! I am used to gentlemen, sir, not to Billingsgate. What the devil do you mean——"

"What do *you* mean, sir," stormed Mr. Barnardiston, "by daring to come before an assembly of upright, loyal, God-fearing citizens with a lie on your lips? What do *you* mean by joining in a vile plot to trick a whole community, and rob a parent of a child——"

"Take care, old gentleman; you are talking libel," interrupted Beau, pleasantly. "The cognac's too much for you. Go home and sleep it off, for it don't do for the

Romans to see their pet Cincinnatus a little the worse for——”

“Hold your tongue, sir,” screamed Barnardiston, purple with rage, “or, by Heaven, I’ll find a way to make you. How dare you come here—both of you—and tell the whole borough that the cursed villain you call friend and brother——”

“Gently: gently, my dear sir; remember how you compromise yourself,” put in Beau, with most solicitous courtesy.

“The consummate rascal,” pursued Barnardiston, fiercer than ever, waxing into sarcasm—“I mean the honorable gentlemen, the noble-hearted, high-spirited Liberal candidate, who has sneaked out of a contest in which he knew he could not win, and ordered his obliging agent and his boy-brother to chicane a whole town with some garbled folly of the cholera to screen his private marriage with the daughter of one whom her father would sooner see——”

“Eh?—what?—what did you say? Married!” cried Beau, nonplussed for once in his life.

“Ay, sir; married. And you know it as well as I, despite your admirable acting, which would do credit to Macready,” sneered the Arch Blue.

“By Heavens, if I had known!” swore Beau, furiously; then stopped and changed his tone. “Married, you say, and to your daughter? Well, I congratulate you. You must feel uncommonly pleased; it is a much higher match than you could have looked for.”

Barnardiston was perfectly black in the face. He turned himself with his back to us, and began to harangue the committee-men, who looked scared out of their lives:

“Fellow citizens!——”

"Ah! that's the correct style," said Beau: "It's so beautifully patriotic."

"Men of Cantitborough, I appeal to you. Judge between me and the honorable gentleman you have chosen to represent you. We have been separated by politics, but we are old fellow-townsmen, and you will give me a patient hearing. Mr. Fitzhardinge comes down to canvass a borough which has only heard of him before through wildness and follies which disgrace his name. He meets a girl—a young girl, an innocent girl—who is betrothed of her own will to one of the purest-minded sweetest-natured men that ever breathed—a man whom you have crowned with the honor of your reverence and esteem——"

"And Easter offerings, with which he buys the whisky that makes his inspiration," interpolated Beau.

"A man whom you all revere and love, and whose heart is locked up in this young girl's affections——"

"Or her ten thousand pounds."

"What does this villain—I can use no milder term, gentlemen—do, but seduce those pure and fond affections from the holy man who once held them—woo her, win her, persuade her to break off the ties of her engagement, and fetter herself anew to him. I refuse my consent because I know Mr. Fitzhardinge's character too well to peril my child's happiness in his keeping——"

"Because you thought Mr. Verdant was hanging after her," interrupted Beau.

"I reject his suit. What does he do? He induces her to brave me with all the open disobedience which cuts so keenly to a father's heart——"

"Turn on Lear—a quotation will save you no end of trouble," said Beau, kindly.

"He persuades her to go and reside——"

"When you'd turned her out of your house."

"To reside with people to whom I have the most marked objection——"

"Why did you court Levison so hard, then, to take your pretty niece?"

"The most marked objection. I distinctly forbid her marriage. She wants two years of her majority; and so this scoundrel——Passion gets the better of me, sirs!"

"Or Cockadoodle's comet wine does."

"When I tell you that Mr. Randolph Fitzhardinge takes the day of his nomination—the day he knew I should be tied to town, endeavoring to serve my country's interests—to marry my poor child privately, with no witnesses but the Levisons, in the church at Elm Court, at ten o'clock this morning. I need comment no further on the miserable trick by which you, gentlemen, and all the rest of Cantitborough, have been duped to-day. I only ask you, as fellow-townsmen, once private friends, and aiways, I hope, friends in the common cause of truth and honor, to side with me, and never allow this destroyer of home peace, this wild, unprincipled scoundrel, to represent in the senate of our nation this free, loyal, and Protestant borough."

"Gentlemen, hear my version," began Beau.

"Will you listen to a villain's employé?" pursued Barnardiston.

"I give you my honor——" cried Beau.

"What is his honor worth?" shouted Barnardiston.

"Will you hear me?"

"Will you believe him?"

Tumultuous was the scene, frightful the commotion, terrific the tempest of Blue and Yellow which raged over devoted Cantitborough. Blues and Yellows swarmed into the Ten Bells yard; Blues and Yellows surged round

mine and Beau's horses; Blues and Yellows asked frantically what was the row, and carrying off but an unintelligible version, proceeded as the next best plan to kick up a row on their own account. They screamed, and shouted, and pummelled each others' shoulders, and punched each others' heads, and hissed, and yelled, and swore, and cudgelled, and

Fought as only men can fight who know no reason why.

In vain the Yellow agent tried to speak. Every elegant missile that the dark night could allow to come to hand was pelted at him and me; in vain the Blue leaders tried to turn the tumult to account; the mob, who being in a mood to pelt, would have pelted the moon could they have got at her, forced them to retreat, covered with much obloquy and still more rotten egg. Smash, crash, went half the windows in the place; ladies rushed from their couches in nightcaps and hysteria; policemen turned and fled, or used their truncheons in some private grudge; not a Town and Gown row, even with Fighting Bob or the first of the fancy in surplice and mortar-board to help us, ever beat it; and at last, in sheer desperation, having satiated ourselves with enough hard hitting to last a twelvemonth, Beau and I set spurs to our horses, and knocking down, at a low computation, some three hundred men and boys, fought our way out of the town, and galloped on to Hollywood in silence.

"By Heaven!" said Beau, through his set teeth, as he threw himself down at last in the arm-chair of the dining-room, thoroughly done up for the first time in his life—"by Heaven! if I'd known Fitz was such a cursed fool, I'd have seen him at the devil before he'd made one of me too. The election's lost, smashed, ruined. I may

as well withdraw his name from the poll. To go and disgrace himself before all the county; to lose a free borough for a bit of a girl, when girls are as plenty as blackberries and quite as worthless; to go and offend his father, and his constituents, and his county, and everything worth considering, from a ridiculous fancy for a little flirt whom he'll be wishing at the devil in twelve months' time—two thousand pounds fifteen shillings and eightpence gone for nothing! I'm a cool man—a very cool man, generally—but I confess this does get the better of me. How shall I ever forget, or how will all the Cantitborough men forget, my being brought down here only to tell them a parcel of lies, and not succeeding through them, even? By Jupiter!" and Beau sprang up from his chair and dashed his hand down on the table with an impetus that made the bottles and glasses on it leap up terrified into the air—"by Jupiter! I swear I'll never speak to your madman of a brother, Frank, or to his confounded wife, as long as I live—never! I, the sharpest dog in all Lincoln's Inn, to be done green like this!"

With which pathetic summary poor Beau fell back again into his chair, and opened his lips no more that night. The morrow dawned; the poll was opened; Beau, like a plucky soldier sticking to his colors as long as there was a rag of them left, rode into Cantitborough early, and I with him, and made his way to the polling-booth in the midst of the yells, and shouts, and feendish exclamations, and laughter, and derision of the mob, who swarmed through the streets still strewn with the débris of the midnight conflict. In vain did Beau seek a hearing from his chief constituents; in vain did he try to gather round him the committee; in vain did he try to rally round him even a few straggling, troopers to

make a stand with him in this Thermopylæan fix. In vain! The Cantitburghers had been duped, and when did ever Christian live with magnanimity enough to pardon that? The news of Fitz's marriage had spread throughout the town; the ladies were furious against Valencia for having hooked the only handsome man who had been seen in Cantitborough for the last ten years. They made their husbands, and sons, and fathers solemnly promise to withdraw their vote from such a wicked fellow, and the husbands, and sons, and fathers, some of them being in love with Val, others liking to buy religious reputation cheap by siding with the pet parson, and others having Fitz's money already in their pockets, determined to hold virtuously aloof from the contest, vowed the required vow, and the tide of public adoration set steadily in for Verdant and Le Hoop Smith.

The committees sat in their respective rooms, the mob round the booth danced, and shouted, and yelled, in utter absence of police, the Peelers being *hors de combat* from the past night's fray; Beau, and two or three staunch Liberals, stood firm, with anxious visage and hearts sunk to zero. The tower clock struck four—the poll was closed—the votes stood thus:

Verdant	550
Le Hoop Smith	310
Salter	200
Fitzhardinge	6

Great was the exultation, great the clamor, that arose. You do not need to be told how the Blue banners waved, and the Blue band, inflamed with triumph and purl, began to play, and the Blue members bowed down to the ground, and thanked the noble, intelligent, and generous community which had returned them as their representa-

tives, how the Blues insulted the Yellows, with frightful contumely, and how the Yellows, few in flesh but strong in spirit, returned the compliment; and how the Yellow banners struck up the Blue banners when the triumphal procession formed, and Blue heads went down under Yellow fists, and Yellow heroes collapsed beneath Blue boots, and the remaining half of the windows were smashed; and how the uproar was at its height, when into the market-place, spurring on Rumpunch, flecked with foam, came the head and root of it, my brother Fitz, as handsome, as devil-may-care, and as cool as ever.

Louder grew the yells, wilder the shouts, fiercer the row; up in the air flew the eggs and the mud and the sticks and the stones, and all the popular missiles of the Great Unwashed; but steady as a rock stood Rumpunch under Fitz's curb, and firm as a rock sat Fitz himself, in the midst of it. There's nothing like pluck for pleasing or awing the canaille; it is the one thing they will appreciate and revere. Their shouts hushed for a second, and they stopped in their onslaught upon him. He took advantage of it, and held up his hand: "Men, listen to me for a minute!"

They did listen to him (Barnardiston had been vigorously assaulted by a potboy, and had gone home to the Larches,) and Fitz went on: "I hear I have lost my election. I am sorry for it, but I could scarcely expect otherwise; and if I have preferred securing an election of another kind, I hope the constituents of Cantithborough are all too gallant and chivalric gentlemen to disagree with me. "Here uprose immense cheering from a few, and laughter even from the enraged community. "I can't alter your decision now, but I'll try to merit a different one next time I contend for the honor of repre-

senting you. I have no right to ask any favor at your hands; but, nevertheless, I am going to ask two: the first, that you will clear my brother, Mr. Francis Fitzhardinge, and my agent and friend, Mr. Beauclerc, of any imputation of knowing the true cause of my absence, and any deliberate intention of concealing it by a lie. The other is, that there may be no disunion or bloodshed on my behalf, and no broken heads caused through my fault. Let us all agree to differ; let the victorious go to their homes without insulting the vanquished, and the vanquished without quarrelling with the conquerors for justly earned success. Let us all part in good will, and let my friends go to the Ten Bells and drink my health and that of my bride, if they will be so kind, with three times three!"

It was a queer election speech, and without precedent, certainly, but in the little antiquated borough it told admirably. Never before was seen such an election, without doubt; but, somehow or other, Fitz, going into a new track, and doing such a thing as had never been done before, got, all of a sudden, more heartily cheered, applauded, and hurraed than the successful candidates themselves. The gentlemen of the town sneered, and ridiculed, and fumed about his speech being most illegal, most unprecedented, most absurd, but the Unwashed, only looking at the pluck, and the manliness of tone, and the flowing taps of the Ten Bells, cheered him vociferously, and would have had the polling done over again if they could. Beau stood looking on, with his brow knit like a Jupiter Tonans, and turned into the Ten Bells with a grunt.

"That fellow should have lived in the middle ages, with all his confounded folly. And yet, devil take him, why can't one hate him?"

"Will you forgive me old boy?" laughed Fitz, following him into a private room twenty minutes after.

"Get out!" growled Beau, yet looking lovingly on him nevertheless. "A pretty fellow you are! making yourself look like a fool, and everybody else. I should have thought you more a man of sense than to run mad after a mere pretty face. Two thousand five hundred pounds fifteen shillings and eightpence gone for nothing!"

"Never mind, old fellow," laughed Fitz. "Barnardiston would have scented the ceremony, and forbidden it, on any other day; and as to waiting till she was of age, quite out of the question. I should have killed myself before half the time was out, so I shouldn't have been much use to the community or the Commons; and if her little face is not better to look at than the Speaker's why——"

"Spare me that, spare me!" cried Beau. "I'll forgive you, but I really can't stand *her* praises."

"Come and look at her, and you'll soon forgive her," said Fitz, taking out his watch. "I've made an immense sacrifice to you, Beau, in leaving her at one o'clock to ride over to this little owl of a town, whose animadversions are much more honor than its praise. She's at Sandslope—you know, that little place by the sea, ten miles from her; I took her there yesterday, and now I must gallop back to her, poor little dear, or she'll be thinking the Blues and Yellows have eaten me up. Ring the bell, Fanny, and ask White to saddle me the best horse in his stables—Rumpunch is dead beat; and I say, Beau," went on Fitz, "don't be vexed, dear old boy. I will canvass for the next election in earnest; and when you come over to Sandslope (we don't want you *just* yet,) If you don't say my poor pet is excuse enough for anything, why you'll be made of granite."

"Hum!" grunted Beau, "I shall always hate her. But that don't matter; give my compliments to her (not my congratulations, for she'll find out that to have you for a husband is no matter for felicitation,) and tell her that my sister the other day walked down Regent Street with 'Chaste and Elegant, 2*l.* 10*s.*' on her cloak, and that I hope she'll ticket herself the same, 'Mrs. Randolph Fitz hardinge, value 2500*l.* 15*s.* 8*d.*,' for she has cost you that to a certainty."

Apparently Fitz still thinks Valencia worth it, for he has never regretted his hasty step. She did look excuse enough for anything when we saw her a week or two after, when they quitted Pottleshire for the Lakes, leaving the county to pull them to pieces at leisure; and she asked Beau's pardon so prettily and penitentially for the mischief she had done, that Beau, being the very reverse of a stoic, forgave her her sins, only made her solemnly promise to leave Fitz unmolested when next he stood for a free borough. Beau was made amiable, too, that morning, by hearing that Le Hoop Smith had been unseated for bribery, and that Barnardiston was already rumored to repent having treated so cavalierly such a high match for his daughter.

Caroline married Whitechurch; they quarrel night and day at home, but abroad, administer, in amicable concert enough, very big texts and very small globules to their unlucky parishioners. Beau is supremely happy just at present, Fitz having procured for him a recordership, long the object of his desires. And Fitz? Well, Fitz writes to me to-day that he is going yachting in the Levant, with Valencia and "three or four *other* pleasant fellows," that Val is as bright as a sunbeam, and agrees with him in thinking the sherbet, laughter, and delicious bags of the Ionian Isles much better than the

odors of the Thames in the senatorial halls of St. Stephen's.

But though they make a jest of it, and think the one election well won and the other well lost, I doubt if Cantitborough has ever forgotten, or will ever forget, the strangest contest that an enlightened borough of the enlightened nineteenth century ever beheld, and if the Cantitburghers will ever cease discussing in news, and drawing, and tap room the memorable strife of **BLUE AND YELLOW WHEN MY BROTHER FITZ STOOD FOR CANTITBOROUGH !**

BELLES AND BLACKCOCK.

BELLES AND BLACKCOCK.

I.

OVER THE HILLS AND FAR AWAY.

AUGUST had come, and grouse and black game, wild-fowl and snipe, salmon and deer, became the prominent ideas in my mind, and I longed for the advent of the 12th as fervently as any cornet for his moustaches, or young lady for her first ball. I had been bored to death by the season. I am not a marrying man, and the great emporium of good matches is of no use to me; so, after concerts and crushes, déjeûners and dinners, the coulisses and the Commons, I was thankful enough when, after having eaten my customary whitebait, I was free to turn my thoughts to the bracken and the mist, the corries and the glens of the dear far-away Western Highlands.

I was impatient to be off. I had my guns browned, bought a new Enfield, overhauled my rods, got no end of new flies, and of course felt discontented with my kennel, though some of my pointers and setters are as good as any on the hill-side, and Ascot, Moustache, and Puseyite cannot be beat either among the turnips or the heather. My cousin Dyneley (Graham Cyril Beauchamp Vavasour, tenth Baron Dyneley, according to that gour-

mand for strawberry-leaves, Mr. Burke) had been asked to shoot over Steinberg's moor with him, but at the eleventh hour the poor old Viscount had a fit of apoplexy; some said from an *excès* in truffles and Tokay at a Star and Garter dinner he gave the Aquilina. He was ordered to "les eaux," and condemned to a regimen, and, bemoaning his bitter fate, despairingly told Dyneley to fill the box as he pleased. So Dyneley asked me to go down with him and Willoughby of the 14th (Light Dragoons)—we always call him Claude, because there are no end of Willoughbys in the army—and one or two other fellows, to make up our party to bag blackcock and stalk deer on poor Steinberg's moor at Glenmist, in Argyleshire.

Dyneley and I had thrashed Bargees, beat the Westminster, pounded the Harrow boys, and pulled to Putney together years ago when we were young bloods at Eton; and I have had many a day's sport with him since, here and there, among the stubble at home, sticking pigs in the jungle, buffalo-hunting in the prairies, going after elephants in Ceylon, and camping out to net ortolans in Scinde. He has been fond of vagabondising (so have I, *entre nous*), and he is known all over the world as well as Wortley Montagu was, and can make himself equally at home in an Arab tent or in a European court; sleeping under his horse's legs in the wilds of the Pampas, or flirting with a Spanish *doña* in some luxurious palace in Madrid.

Dyneley is poor for a peer, though rich compared to such fellows as Willoughby, who has not money enough to keep his horses. Dyneley's governor went deucedly fast, and spent every shilling the entail would let him lay his hand upon. To be a rich peer, is decidedly a very jolly birth-right; but a poor one—I would as soon be one

of the grooms about the Yard. Dyneley thought so too; so, after *he* had gone fast also, he shut up his place in Hampshire to retrench by itself, sold the town-house, took his yacht *Aphrodite* and wandered over the face of the earth, seeing life in all its possible phases, firing a book or two now and then at the world, getting a reputation for cleverness and eccentricity (everything is called eccentric that is at all out of the beaten track), and at five-and-thirty came back from his travels to be admired by some, cavilled at by others, likened by young ladies to Lara and Manfred, and to be fêté as a singular mélange of Gordon Cumming, Lamartine, and Layard.

He was, however, utterly unlike any of the three, as it happened.

“Well, Monti, are all your traps ready?” said he, when I went to see him one morning at Maurigy’s, where he had been staying ever since he and the *Aphrodite* had come home. He was swinging himself in a rocking-chair, smoking a hookah he had brought from Cairo, his stag-hound Mousquetaire lying at his feet. Willoughby chanced to be breakfasting with him, and was lying full length on a sofa. He used to be nicknamed Bella in his troop, for he has all the beauty of his mother, who made a great row when she came out, but ended by marrying for love upon nothing, which aerial inheritance she bequeathed to poor Claude, with her soft almond eyes and fair hair. He is a tall, broad-chested fellow, but Dyneley, swinging there in his rocking-chair, though not so big, beats him hollow in sinew and power; and his face, with its haughty, pale, refined features, and dark eyes that can soften and flash wonderfully when they are moved, has a greater charm for women than even Claude’s, though *he* is called the Crusher, from his merciless slaughter of the pretty game—game which he kills

as I have shot parrots in India, to leave where they fell. "If you are ready," continued Dyneley, "I think we may as well start. Vere tells me he never shot over better ground. There's a salmon river, plenty of snipe in the moss, and Fitzcorrie's forest joins the moor. I know him intimately: he'll let us kill some stags, to say nothing of the out-lying ones. Shall we travel all night? May as well."

"For Heaven's sake, Dyneley, no!" cried Willoughby, with more energy than he often threw into things. "It's all very well for you fellows, with your muscles of iron, that that clever chap in "Guy Livingstone" writes so much about, to talk in that barbarous style. You, who've worn sheepskins with Bedouins, and crossed the Fjord with Laps, may find fun in such monstrosities, but I never tire myself if I can help it; and as to cramping my legs by travelling all night, I'll be shot if I do it, not if you offer me half a million at my journey's end."

"Haven't half a million to offer," said Dyneley, setting down some cold game to Mousquetaire. "It's exactly the sum I want myself, and when I find it I'll open Vauxley, and take my seat in the Lords. But I shouldn't have thought you such a lazy dog, Claude, last February three years, when you pogged that tiger at Darjeeling."

"That?" said Claude. "Oh! that was nothing. I wanted amusement, and the brute turned up. No! I'm a very lazy man. As I'm a poor devil, I must stick in the Cavalry till I'm providentially shot in some scrimmage; but if I were rich, I'd live among roses and myrtles in Arabia Felix, with a harem and a hookah, lots of sherbet, and some Nautch girls, and never stir all day."

"I tried that once when I was in the East," said Dyneley, "and got intensely bored after a little while; and so would you. Sofa cushions, narghilé, and alme, made me

keenly feel the truth of "toujours perdrix." I thought the girls delightful at first, but for a continuance one wants something besides ankles and almond eyes. They never open their lips for any better purpose than to show their white teeth, and you know I've a weakness for brains."

"Do you find yourself any better served in that commodity by English belles than by Turkish bayadères? I don't."

"No!" said Dyneley, after a long pull at his hookah; "women are women all the world over. Whether the question is rouge or betel-nut, rings on the fingers or rings through the nose, women are born, live, and die solely for 'the toilette.' Last March, when I was staying down at Fairlie's, I noticed, one wet day, that his wife and Fanny Villiers, being thrown on their own resources, talked on for five consecutive hours, without stopping, of—DRESS; how splendidly somebody was got up on her presentation, how badly somebody else was dressed at the Handel concert, what one woman's diamonds possibly cost, how little, they knew for a certainty, another had given for her Honiton, consoling themselves with the hope that 'Adelaide's' pearls were paste, pulling their friends to pieces, cheapening this and envying that, till, by George! it really made me sad to think with what bitter truth our mothers, and sisters, and wives, and daughters might write on their lily-white brows, 'Rubbish shot here!'"

"Their heads ain't more empty than their hearts are icicles," muttered Claude, stroking his silky chestnut moustache. "I've flirted, I dare say, as much as most men, but, as Dick Swiveller says, 'I never loved a dear gazelle but it was sure to marry a market-gardener.' A girl who was mad about me when she was skating in a

black hat and a red petticoat at Christmas, I was certain to see the season after selling herself at St. George's in Mechlin and orange-flowers."

"My dear fellow, you're not singular," laughed Dyneley. "I remember having very tender meetings in orange-groves as poetical as you could wish with a handsome Granadine, who vowed her heart would break when we parted, there not being room for her in the yacht. Twelve months after, touching at Frangerola, I went to see after my doña, feeling a friendly interest in her; lo! she'd married a lean old alcade a fortnight after my departure;—and beautiful Venetians, whom I left inconsolable, I was certain to find provided with my substitute when I and the *Aphrodite* called there again. But about starting to-morrow; we may as well go at once. Curtis and Romer won't come down till the 20th. If you like to sleep in Glasgow, Claude, do. I shall push on; I hate dawdling when I'm once en route. What of that new dog of yours, Monti, do you think he'll stand the heather? Pointers can't often. My kennel's in first-rate condition. You've never seen Mousquetaire pull down a stag. Empress is second best, and Eros and Royal are good working dogs."

We talked on, as hard as a lot of girls talking over a wedding, of the respective merits of Enfield and Purdey, rifle powders and cartridges, spoons, governors, and flies, and all the thousand necessities of the moors; comparing notes of the royals we had stalked and the salmon we had played, with many a reminiscence of a good day's sport wound up with a haunch of roe or grilled black-cock, and washed down with steaming tumblers of Farintosh or foaming pints of Prestonpans.

Start we did the next morning, and slept at Glasgow, too, for Dyneley, though he is given to making out that

he is a profound egotist, generally gives up his own wishes to other people's. We went on to Greenock early the next morning, and steamed up Loch Fine to Inverary, where Steinberg's head-keeper was waiting for us with a dog-cart and some other traps to take us on the twenty miles to Glenmist.

"Delicious! isn't it?" said Dyneley, looking down into a trout stream as he drove along through the mist, smoking vigorously. "Don't you long to be flinging a fly in there?"

"De—licious! well, I don't know," murmured Claude, wringing the wet from his long moustaches, "people's tastes differ. I can't say myself that I ever thought being as moist as an otter or a Scarborough boatman was any peculiar state of blessedness, but it may be one lives and learns."

"'Pon, my life, Claude, to hear you talk, if I hadn't seen you pig-sticking up in Scinde, I should think you deserved the name of 'Bella,' you indolent dog," said Dyneley, whipping up the mare.

"So I do," drawled Claude. "There's not a handsomer man in the Service. All the women will tell you that."

"The almond-paste and kalydor are all you think about, I suppose?"

"My dear fellow, I don't use anything so common. I've a private recipe for cosmetique that I wouldn't suffer out of my hands for half Barclay's, bad as I want tin. I wouldn't mind letting you have a little; it'll keep the sun from bronzing you."

"Don't be such a fool," laughed Dyneley. "Bah! if I thought a girl used either cosmetique or rouge, I wouldn't kiss her now if she were as beautiful as Omphale. Would you?"

"Can't say what I mightn't do under temptation," said Claude, piously. "I'm afraid I haven't always forsworn actresses and danseuses. Have you? And, as my sister Julia paints, I've had to kiss rouge through a sense of duty sometimes."

"Julia must be over thirty; she's only a year younger than you, if I remember?"

"No, poor thing! She's flirted from Dublin to Devonport, and from Canada to Calcutta, all to no purpose. She can't even hook a cornet."

"She must be very stupid, then," said Dyneley. "Between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two I can distinctly remember being engaged to eight different women—all *bonâ fide* affairs, too—rings, and hair, and all the rest of it. Boys always take to old women, too; the sort of women from whom, in after years, they'd flee to the uttermost ends of the earth. In my opinion, there ought to be a law to prevent young fellows committing themselves. The sylph in white muslin that they adore when they're one-and-twenty, they find when they're one-and-thirty to be a common-place, and, alas! too often fat or red-nosed lady, who looks old enough to be their mother, and who, if they've the misfortune to be tied to her, clings round their neck like a brickbat round a drowning dog's."

"Bravo, Dyneley! You're positively speaking philosophy and truth, two combinations rarely seen on this earth," said I. "Are those the motives that have kept you from matrimony hitherto?"

"I? No. I shall marry for money if ever I do—sell myself to the highest bidder, to keep up the title. That's what you'll end in, too, Claude, eh?"

"No," answered Willoughby, sharply, for a wonder. "I shall never marry at all."

"Quite wise, if you can live without it. Here's the lodge; snug little place, isn't it? I wish poor old Steinberg were here to welcome us. I dare say we shall find some grilled grouse waiting for us. Steinberg always tells Alister to shoot some a few days before the 12th."

The grilled grouse was waiting for us, and a good fire, too, for the mist made it a chilly night. Alister (the head keeper) gave us good accounts of the moor. The broods of grouse were large; there were plenty of home-bred snipe in the moss, and fowl in the pools, and salmon, and jack, and trout in the river. Fitzcorrie was expected daily down at Glengrouse, and one or two outlying stags had been seen on our moor. Altogether, there was good sport in prospect; and when we had done dinner, and sat round the fire in Steinberg's cozy fauteuils, smoking Cavendish and drinking toddy, and listening to the witty, graphic, satiric sketches with which Dyneley can, when he chooses, delight a mess-table, charm a drawing-room, and even amuse a club-room, we felt as contented and comfortable as any three men could, and rejoiced exceedingly at having escaped drums, crushes, concerts, manœuvring chaperones, and inveigling belles, to enjoy ourselves on the moors, in the dear, free, sans gêne bachelor life.

II.

WE BAG BLACKCOCK AND MARK BELLES.

"EXTRAORDINARY what a deal one can do under pressure," said Willoughby, when we were discussing Loch

Fine herrings and a lot of other Highland delicacies at six o'clock the following morning. "I never in my life breakfast before twelve up in town or in barracks, except on Derby Day, and then every one makes an effort, and sacrifices his natural term of rest. My cousin, little Flo, and her mother came to see me the other day at Knightsbridge at two o'clock, after their luncheon, dear primitive things! I wasn't up; and I wrote her word I was very sorry for her disappointment, but I didn't know it was her habit to call upon people in the middle of the night."

"You're keener on the hills, old chap, or you wouldn't make a very heavy bag, laughed Dyneley. "You're a prize specimen, Claude, of the militaire noble—all *dolce*, bouquet, and *ennui* at home, all pluck, and game, and true as steel when you're marking birds in the open, or *Cafres* in a skirmish."

Claude bowed down to his plate at the compliment. "Well, you know when one's blood is up one likes to polish off the devils handsomely; if I've any very great impetus I don't so much mind tiring myself."

"There's an impetus strong enough for any man. Come along," said Dyneley, springing up, and going to the window, through which we saw a whole crowd of keepers, gillies, pointers, retrievers, terriers, stag-hounds, setters, the old white pony in the midst of them, with cold black game, sandwiches, Bass and whisky on his back, for our luncheon when we'd shot up to the falls. By Jove, such sport as we had that day was worth twenty guineas an hour! I'm sure, to look calmly at a future time, when one will get out of condition, and the gun will begin to feel heavy, and gout will make one hobble over the heather, and asthma force one to puff and blow, requires more philosophy than all the old Greeks put together could have mustered if they'd ever

known the pleasures of the moors. Talk of Socrates smiling at the hemlock, and Seneca inspecting the chopping up of his own veins! they are nothing to contemplating the days when, tied to one's arm-chair, we shall recall the corries and the glens as joys that are no more for us. We had splendid sport that day; there was a Highland mist, (that in Hyde Park, or among the English turnips, we should have thought a heavy shower;) a pull up a hill of some eight hundred feet; rocks sharp as needles to scramble over, and deep burns to wade through, and underwood as thick as jhow jungle, but we never had primer fun in our lives; and Claude—lazy dog, as he'd make himself out—enjoyed himself more, wet, stiff, and dead-beat in the moss, and marshes, and brushwood of Glenmist, than he would have been in the most luxurious spot you could put him in.

He and I made very good use of our time, and knocked down grouse and the black game, besides snipe, teal and a few hares, right and left. But Dyneley took the shine off us. Alister looked on at him with as much delight as that canny Scotsman could ever be stirred into; and, 'pon my honor, he does handle a gun beautifully. To be sure, he's had such practice as few men have, and the East and the West could tell you many a tale of his deeds, camping out in the Punjab jungles and the primeval woods, and I dare say a better shot than he was never seen on the moors; he does it all so coolly and yet so untiringly, too, putting no end of energy into it, yet never half as fagged as other men are.

The mist had cleared off, and the sun came out, by the time we reached the falls, and found the old pony, the plaids, and the Bass, and stretched ourselves on the heather to have a pipe and enjoy our lancheon.

“Well, this is pleasant, decidedly, but I doubt if it's

philosophic," said Willoughby, taking a pull at the mountain dew, "When one looks upon it in a serious light. I doubt if three sensible men, all over thirty, coming four hundred miles on purpose to fatigue, exhaust, and take it out of themselves in every possible way, for the express purpose of putting some shot into unhappy birds, or crawling through bush and briar, after the manner of the serpent, that was more subtle than any beast of the field—I doubt, if taken philosophically, there is not something——"

"Hang philosophy!" laughed Dyneley. "What's in Plato, Lucullus, Swedenborg, Kant, Whewell, Stuart Mill, that will do a man half the good, body and mind, that a good day on the hills does? You know I've read pretty well as much as most fellows, though I don't go in for a classic, and when I get my half million, one of the first things I look after at Vauxley will be the library; but I do say that a man who knows how to handle his rifle and his rod is worth fifty of your regular bookworms. I remember, when I was at Granta, fellows who used to sap tremendously, green tea, Greek roots, and all the rest of it. Their mathematics were something wonderful; their whole brain was one giant Euclid; they were a walking classical dictionary, and spent months debating the derivation of a word. What were they worth in the world? Babies in practical knowledge; natural history or everyday politics a dead letter to them. Put them across the Channel, they could not muster words to ask for their dinner; and, tried in any manly sport, a boy from Eton would laugh them to scorn. Bah! what are such men worth?"

"Nothing, most noble lord, in my opinion," said Claude. "Pity you're not in the House, Graham: you'd be as eloquent as Sheil or Bernal Osborne."

“On the uses of the moors?—that would be a novel debate, certainly; quite as sensible as the Maynooth and certain others, perhaps. I tell you, when I find my half million, I shall take my proxy out of Lord John’s hands. But it’s no good putting on a peer’s robes with a miserable six or eight thousand a year. I prefer absenting myself and Bohemianising to going in for certain expenses which I have no money to meet. By George! there’s Empress pointing,” said he, jumping up. “Good old thing she is. Steady, Empress, steady. There, we shall have them now beautifully. Whisky, Whisky, you little devil, confound you!”

Whisky, a young dog of Steinberg’s that had never been on the heather before, had spoiled the chance of a splendid brood of birds. Dyneley’s eyes flashed; he’s impetuous and passionate sometimes, and Whisky’s fault was very provoking to a keen sportsman, remember; he raised his gun to the dog, and would have shot him in the heat of the minute, but Alister stopped him. “Whisky’s unco young, my lord, and he don’t know no better yet, poor brute.” Dyneley shook him off with a haughty gesture—I tell you he can be fiery on occasion—but after a minute or two he cooled down, and turned to Alister with his frank, sunny smile. “You were right, and I was wrong. I am glad you stopped me in a cruelty which I certainly should have been ashamed of and sorry for afterwards.”

I heard Alister say to my servant, a few days after, that “the laird was a bit fiery, but he was a true gentleman and a leal heart, God bless him!” to which my man heartily agreed, tossing down some usquebaugh in his honor.

We had first rate sport for the next few days; the weather was not the finest, but the rain kept the streams

up; there was a good speat in the river, and Dyneley, who is never happier than when whipping the water, hooked and landed a thirty-pound salmon. We bagged plenty of ducks and snipe, and some few ptarmigan. We had a battue of mountain hares when Curtis and Romer joined us, and we killed a hare and a two-year-old buck, and found the slot of another, which we lost by his heading to the forest.

“Fitzcorrie’ll come down to-morrow,” said Dyneley one morning, when the letter-bag came in. “Poor old fellow, he’s been kept up in town, chained to his gout-stool through this splendid August. He’ll fill the Castle, of course, and he hopes we shall have a good many days with him in his forest. I shan’t go and stay up there, though; will you? There’ll be his wife and several other women, and when one is dead-beat it’s pleasanter to throw oneself on a sofa and have a pipe than to dress for a nine-o’clock dinner, and waltz and talk nonsense to the girls. You don’t do justice either to the moors or the flirtations. Fitzcorrie takes a most paternal interest in my affairs; he’s always wanting me to marry—pour cause, he’d like to have me in the House to support his measures—and he keeps a look-out for heiresses on my behalf. He will bring one down with him to Glengrouse. Hark what he says: ‘I have found exactly what you want, my dear fellow. You have been so little in England, that probably you may not know her. She is a belle, very accomplished, and worth twenty thousand a year. Her father was a Brummagem peer created by Peel; but we anciens pauvres cannot afford to be fastidious. You can have her for the asking, I don’t doubt. Douglas Jerrold’s tillocracy will give anything for your quarterings. She’s coming to stay with Florence, so you must mind and mark something besides black-

cock, for I really think either Adeliza or Constance Vandeleur would be an admirable match for you——’ Hallo, Claude, what’s the matter? don’t you feel well?”

“Yes, thank you,” said Claude, hastily taking a draught out of one of the great silver tankards filled with XXX. “It’s this confounded arm of mine that the ball broke at Mejeerut; I dare say the gun strained it a little.”

“Ah! broken limbs are the very deuce. I could almost blow my brains out when the neuralgia comes on in the leg that got the grape into it when you and I charged together, old boy, on those miserable little Caffre wretches,” said Charlie Curtis.

“Let Sandy carry your gun, Claude, up to the pass, for it’s a good five miles to the spot where they have seen the deer,” said Dyneley. “Romer, do you know this prize young lady?”

“Yes, I’ve seen her; everybody has, except nomades like you, who forsake Christian lands to stalk to and fro in the deserts. Her grandfather was a Birmingham man—it’s disgusting what a set of snobs the peerage is getting—there’s no end of tin in the family, produce of Japan tea-trays or electro-plate, I forget which; and she is a good coup—perhaps the best, as far as money goes, of the season—so give her your coronet, pray, and ask us all down to Vauxley for Christmas. By the way, you know her, don’t you, Claude? You can tell us all about her. Isn’t there a sister a co-heiress?”

“I believe so.”

“Believe so? when you stayed in the same house with ’em at Somerleyton three weeks last February?”

“Well done, old fellow!” cried Curtis, laughing. “The XXX is too strong for you, pauvre garçon, or have you met some Highland Mary here, who’s turned your brain? Which is it?”

"Neither," said Claude, in his old lazy tone. "But, my dear Charlie, how can you possibly expect me to remember two girls I met full six months ago? I should want scores of memorandum-books merely to enter all the women that make love to me. Sufficient for the day is the flirtation thereof, and to be called on to recollect mere acquaintances is too great a run upon any man's memory."

"Well," said I, "you can tell us, at any rate, what Fitzcorrie's find is like. Never pretend, Claude, that the color of a woman's eyes, or the size of her ankle, ever goes out of your mind."

"Can't indeed," answered Claude. "Blue eyes chase black, hazel succeed grey, in very quick succession in my memory. We poor soldiers, you know, learn to be inconstant in our own defence. If we couldn't leave London belles for bright eyes at Exeter, Exeter eyes for Devonport waltzers, and Devonport waltzers, in their turn, for Yorkshire Die Vernons, with a proper amount of philosophy, our hearts would be broken in as many pieces as a coquette has different locks of hair. I say, Dyneley, we must be off if we want to stalk that buck. Mousquetaire will pull him down if any hound can. I envy you that dog."

Fitzcorrie came down the day after to Glengrouse, one of the finest estates in Scotland, with his Viscountess, a haughty young beauty, Constance and Adeliza Vandeleur, and several men, some of them the best shots in the three kingdoms. Fitzcorrie, one of the keenest debaters in the House, is as fresh as a boy again when he gets upon the moors. He is very fond of Dyneley, too, and gave us all *carte blanche* to his forests, and a general invitation to go whenever we liked to the Castle, where dinner was on the table every night at nine, when we

were not too done up to consider ladies' smiles too dearly bought by the trouble of a toilette, and to prefer a haunch and some Farintosh in bachelor freedom at our snug little lodge.

The first day Dyneley and I went up alone. Glen-grouse lay just across the river, and we rode there in twenty minutes by a short cut. Claude was too fagged, he said, to endure the exertion of putting himself *en grande tenue*, and Curtis and Romer followed his example. We found a good sized party. Dyneley took Constance Vandeleur in to dinner, and talked to her a good deal, studying her with a keen, critical glance. She quite deserved her character of a belle: she had the Irish beauty, dark hair and blue eyes; she was just middle height, graceful and natural, with nothing of the parvenue about her. Adeliza was handsome too, but much more haughty and self-conscious; she came down, however, to Dyneley, whom she tried to charm away from her sister, for Graham (I like to call him sometimes by the old boyish name) has a very soft, gentle way with women, and very amusing conversation; besides, his wandering life, his known talents, and the originality and daring of what he had written, threw a sort of aroma of interest round him.

"Well, what do you think of your proposed wife?" said I, as we trotted slowly home, smoking, in the warm August night.

"Do as well as another, don't you think?"

"Probably; but that is not very enthusiastic."

"Enthusiasm is gone by for me. I've done with it, and I don't expect ever to be roused into it; indeed, I don't wish it."

I laughed. "You make yourself out very philosophic, Gra, but it seems to me that when you have your mind

set upon anything, you're much as impatient and energetic as you were at Eton."

"In sport, very likely; and if I resolve upon any step I do it at once. But I assure you, Monti, life has trampled out all my romance—and so best. I am a practical man now. I expect nothing from people, so I shall never be disappointed, as I was in my green youth, when I indulged myself, like a simpleton, in illusions and ideals, and such unprofitable ware. I think I shall marry one of these Vandeleurs; the bargain will be even. I have the good blood, they the money. Of the two, I prefer the blue-eyed one. Constance, isn't she called? She is more lively and less dignified; I hate a dignified woman. She will be a graceful mistress for Vauxley. What do I want more?"

"‘Love,’ poets and women would tell you."

"Love, my dear fellow? I never expect to love my wife, do you? We none of us do in these prudent days. I have never seen any one worth loving, as perhaps I *could* love a woman; nor do I wish to be roused into anything so stormy. This day ten years I shall care no more for Constance or her sister, if I marry either, than I do now; but either of them will keep up my title, head my table, make me an accomplished wife, and, as I am tired of vagabondising, I shall absorb myself in political life, dashed with some good sporting, and shall be a very happy man, as the world's happiness goes. Here we are. I'm very tired, and shall be glad to turn in. We don't want any opiates to-night. Bonne nuit, old fellow. How grave you look, Montague; one would fancy you were thinking of marriage yourself!"

I did not like, somehow or other, the idea of Dyneley's selling himself. I knew his nature, and I thought—But, however, I remembered this is a barter that our rigid

moralist society sanctions, so I troubled my head about it no more, but put the light out and turned in.

During the next few days, Dyneley, Curtis, and I dined once or twice at the Castle. Constance was very accomplished, and sang splendidly, and would have been charming but for a *distrail* manner at times that made her spirits as variable as English weather. We could not get Claude up to Glengrouse; one day he was dead-beat; another, his arm had the tic in it: another, he went up in the evening to the Upper Water to fish; and two others, he separated himself from us about noon, and we never saw any more of him till nine or ten, when he came in after a stalk or a hunt for ptarmigan that would have shut up any fellow with less iron nerves than this disciple of the dolce.

"I wish I could get Claude up here," Dyneley was saying to Lady Fitzcorrie one night. "He has a beautiful voice, and would help you with those duets. He is a dear old fellow, but he is such an incorrigibly lazy dog, and really, after the day's hard work, his arm that was broken by a spent shot pains him a good deal, and prevents his enjoying society."

Constance, standing close by playing with a spaniel, looked up. "What did you say, Lord Dyneley? Did you speak to me?"

"I was saying that my friend Willoughby would make you a good tenor. But you know him, I think. Claude Willoughby of the 14th?"

Constance started like a young fawn—I thought of it long afterwards—and bent over the spaniel, while her voice trembled: "Captain Willoughby? Where is he? Is he here?"

"He is staying with us at Glenmist," said Dyneley, without noticing her particularly. "I will drag him here

somehow to-morrow, if his arm will give him any peace."

The young lady flushed up and said, rapidly crossing the room to the conservatory before she could have an answer, "If we are such *bêtes noires* to him, pray do not try to force him here against his will. Do you encourage such cavalier treatment, Florence?"

"Oh!" said Lady Fitzcorrie, shrugging her snowy shoulders, "with the *vieille cour* of the Trianon all courtesy died out in Europe. That rude fop, Brummel, mistook impertinence for wit, and his disciples out-Herod Herod."

Constance had disappeared in the labyrinths of the conservatory, and left Dyneley to conduct the defence, which that witty conversationalist sustained very ably.

The next day we were to have a grand drive, and Fitzcorrie, ready to like Willoughby as Dyneley liked him would not let him off. The day was fine, the wind just right, and there was a magnificent herd of fifty or more stags and hinds. We killed five of them. Dyneley's was a royal; he had wounded him mortally before Mousquetaire pulled him down. Claude's and Fitzcorrie's had nine points each; and altogether, I should say five finer stags were never killed in the same drive. We all went to the Castle to dinner; Fitzcorrie, as I said, would not let Claude off, spite of the tic; he told him Lafitte and Rudesheimer were the best cures for neuralgia, and Claude had to accede. I could not imagine why he shunned the Castle; for no sport was generally so agreeable to the "Crusher" as a new flirtation, and he would leave any quarry to go after the *beaux yeux*. As we crossed the park in front of the house, we saw the Viscountess and the Vandeleurs taking a stroll before dinner on the terrace, with two or three other ladies staying there

"There," said Fitzcorrie, lifting his bonnet to them, "don't you think, Willoughby, that I've chosen well for our friend? That's the future Lady Dyneley; the one in white silk walking with Florence. Is she not really very pretty?"

The Light Dragoon's soft black eyes flashed, and he answered rather incoherently, stroking his chestnut moustache, something to the effect that near Lady Fitzcorrie no one could hope to shine.

The old Viscount smiled. He was proud of his handsome young wife, who, like Themistocles's lady, ruled the ruler of Athens.

The Viscountess came down the steps laughing at some flowery speech of Romer's to her; Adeliza smiled most generously at Dyneley, and began to inquire about our sport. Constance stood still, playing with the fuchsia in a vase; all the color was out of her cheeks, but that might be the heat. It came back in a rush, though, as Claude lifted his cap to her, spoke a few words to Adeliza, and then leant on his gun in a silence and indifference very unlike the tenderness and empressment of his general manner with the sex. Dyneley put his arm through his and pulled him up the steps towards her.

"Lady Constance, here is your Giuglini. You've heard him, I dare say, so I needn't advertise his vocal powers; but I wish I had them, for when I am hard up, as I too often am, I would have a concert at the Crystal Palace and replenish my exchequer."

Claude's eyes were fixed on the girl with a look I could not exactly translate. He laughed lightly, however.

"My dear fellow, you'd make me out a second Sims Reeves; but Lady Constance knows better than to believe you—that is, if her memory does Somerleyton the honor of remembering any of the evenings there."

This simple remark had great effect on Constance. Though she was a belle, and had just run the gauntlet of her first season, and should, therefore, have been self-possessed and impassive, her face glowed very *couleur de rose*, and she pulled the poor fuchsia mercilessly.

"You appear to regard Somerleyton as a very dim era of the past," she said, quickly. "I have a sufficiently good memory to be able to go back as far as last March. You, however, have probably things of newer interest to chase it out of your mind."

"I am a poor cavalry man, Lady Constance, with nothing but my holster pistols and charger; and as I am sure of being forgotten, I am glad enough to teach myself to forget," answered Claude, smiling, as he calmly stroked his moustaches, and played with a setter's ears.

"You would throw Hermione's name, then, into the fountain of oblivion without mercy?" said the young beauty through her white teeth, but laughing carelessly too.

"Why not? Hermione would throw mine."

"Constance," cried Lady Fitzcorrie, "come and look at Dyneley's dog. This is the famous Mousquetaire; isn't he a fine fellow?"

Constance bent over Mousquetaire, praising and caressing him most sedulously; and her sister joined us, glancing at Mousquetaire's master, who, leaning on his rifle, with his cap drawn down on his white forehead, looked, as I heard a young lady with light eyes whisper, "just like the dear Corsair." As we looked at the Vandeleurs and Mousquetaire, I dare say we all thought of "Loye me, love my dog."

Dyneley took Constance in to dinner, and made himself charming, as he could when he liked, better than any man I know. Claude sat opposite to them, and talked

ceaselessly to the young lady with light eyes, whose intellect, being of narrowed limits, took his random wit literally, and, I dare say, put a mem. of him in her Diary with the green velvet cover and patent embossed lock, interlining all her adjectives: "Sat next Captain Wiloughby. He has *beautiful* black eyes and fair hair, but is rather *peculiar*. I have heard of officers so shocked by the scene of the battle-field, that they have never quite recovered their senses. He tells me that he has so bad a memory, that the day after Balaklava he was obliged to ask his servant how he got the cut on his sword arm, *I cannot believe it*. I noticed Constance look at him *very* oddly while he was talking to me. I hope he is not mad, he is so handsome."

III.

THE LITTLE DIAMOND IN THE DESERT.

A MORNING or two after, Dyneley and I went out by ourselves. Alister was gone with Curtis and Romer to the head of the loch to drag for pike; Claude had taken his gun, and said he should walk up to the pools, and have a shot at the ducks; and Dyneley and I, with Mousquetaire and a brace of setters, had a fancy to try the glen for black game, and, if we found a roe, so much the better. We had good sport till two o'clock, when the pony met us, as usual, by the falls, and we threw ourselves down by the river-side under some willows to cool our throats with Prestonpans, and perfume the woods and hills with our after-luncheon pipe. The pipes and beer made us fresh again, and, after a talk of

old Eton days and fun we had had together in the *Aphrodite*, of wild things we had done together, and of dark days in his life, in which I only knew how he had suffered or sinned, we got up to blaze away anew at the blackcock. "Let bygones be bygones. They give me the blue devils to recal them!" said he, springing up. "My life has never been very bright, and never will be. I laughed the other day, when I read in the *Literary Lorgnon*, speaking of me and my works—'This brilliant and wayward peer has been singularly favored by fortune. With descent as pure as any in the peerage, and talents daring and original, all the fairies, as Macaulay writes of Byron, have surely blessed his birth.' Good, wasn't it? If the fairies were at my birth, there must have been a devil or two among them who marred it all. Those double-distilled donkeys should know more of a man's life before they venture to relate it. I was made to be a happy man, I think, but, somehow, I've missed it. To ho! Steady, Bluebell! Two brace. Nice birds, are they not? Wait a moment! By Jove, Monti, look here! this is the slot of a deer, and a fresh one, too."

"That it is," said I. "What glorious luck! And it's a good large one. Let's go over the hill, and look down the other side."

"All right," said Dyneley, taking his rifle; and sending the little gillie, with the pony, guns, and setters, round to the pass to which it was most likely the deer would head, we began the stalk. We did the two miles over the hill quickly, and, looking through the glass, we spied a stag's horn far away crouching among the heather. There was but one way of stalking him—a very stiff pull, and a good part of it in full view of the stag; but we would have gone through Avernus to have a shot at him. Away went Dyneley at the swinging pace

that had taken him across the Cordilleras and Himalayas, and I after him, though when it came to the serpentine crawl I confess he outdid me, and swore a trifle at me for being such a slow coach. Over the slippery rocks, up to our knees in a burn, pushing through the tangled brushwood, we went on and for miles, and when Dyneley climbed to the top of the glen, and looked through his glass, he found the stag had used his legs as well as we, and he could just make out his antlers as he had lain down to rest again among the heather. A long dance that unhappy beast led us; but had we been ten times worse beat, wasn't it worth it all to hear the ping of Dyneley's bullet as it bedded itself in the stag's shoulder, and see Mousquetaire, after a short chase, spring at his throat, and pull him down, covered with the reeking blood of his gallant captive? Bravo! my veins tingle when I think of it. Oh! your rose wreaths, and your Falernian and Epicurean joys, what are they all to a long day among the corries and glens with No. 4 and dear old Purdey, and a royal hart in sight!

But all pleasures are bought with a price—at least, so those prosy old gentlemen the moralists say; and to punish us for our pride and exaltation in having stalked and shot one of the finest stags of the season, lo! Dyneley and I found ourselves—lost! Lost, as if we were the two babes in the wood of time-honored celebrity, only, as Gra remarked, there were, unhappily, no dead leaves and robins to finish us pathetically, there being nothing on the moors but heather and black game. Lost we were: two men who had been over almost every inch of ground in the Old World and the New! It was too ridiculous, but it was getting late; we had come out into a distant part of the moor we had never shot over; a mist had enveloped everything in density, and in the opaque

atmosphere neither he nor I could have told our way back to the lodge, to save our lives.

"It's pitch dark, Monti," laughed he, drawing his plaid tighter. "We're in for it, I expect. Do you mind camping out? We've done it many a time. It makes one rather stiff in the morning, though, that's the worst of it; but with plaids and flasks one oughtn't to complain. I've been worse off before now. Have you any fusees there?"

I had not, nor had he. He tried to get a light with two sticks, but the wood would not catch, it was too damp.

"Hang it!" cried Dyneley, throwing them away impatiently—patience is not in his composition—"to stay till morning without a pipe!—impossible! Never suffered such a deprivation since I was seven, and smoked my first Queen! And besides, the stag! Devil take it, Monti, I *will* get home! Come along."

Easier said than done. After we had bled and grallocked the deer, and tied a handkerchief to his horns, we blundered on through the dark, he pushing his way with his usual reckless impetuosity, till it was a mercy he didn't pitch himself down some precipice, or brain himself against a rock, till we were on the top of the hill on whose side we had killed the stag. We looked round; there was plenty of dense fog and inky sky; nothing more perceptible till Dyneley, who has the quick eye and ear of the Indians, with whom he has hunted, caught sight of a little light flashing in and out of the mist.

"Look there!" said he; "that's a homestead of some sort. If it's only a hut, it's better than nothing. The shepherd can put us right. Hie, Mousquetaire! show us the way, old boy."

Mousquetaire—certainly the cleverest dog I ever knew

—looked in his face with his wise, clear, brown eyes, sniffed, paused, and set off at a trot down the hill.

“He’ll take us right,” said Dyneley, who, skeptic though he is in human flesh, has unbounded faith in Mousquetaire.

He did take us right. After groping our way, many times within an inch of our lives, with many headlong descents that would have seemed perils gigantic to Brown, Jones, and Robinson touring for a fortnight on leave from Twining’s or Barclay’s, we found Mousquetaire heading us to a gate before the garden of a house, in one of whose windows the blessed light was still twinkling.

“Quite romantic. What a pity we are not eighteen, to magnify it into an adventure,” whispered Dyneley, “Whose house is it, I wonder? Do you see a bell or a knocker anywhere about? I thought nothing but black game keepers and shepherds dwelt in these parts. The dence, Monti, look up there. What a pretty face! quite Rembrandtesque.”

I looked up to where he pointed. It was a bedroom window—the identical one that had our light in it; there were no blinds, or at least they were not drawn down, and before the glass stood a young girl putting fuchsia sprays into her hair. She was very picturesque even to our tired eyes—at least, in this dismal night she seemed so. At a concert, or an opera, or a crush, we might never have thought of her. She was smiling at herself as she twisted the flowers in her shining gold hair; there was no self-consciousness or art of the toilette about her, and it was pretty to see her put them in and pull them out, and laugh at herself all the while. At last she threw some of the rejected flowers down and glanced up at the night, a sad expression stealing over her face, so full

of fun a moment ago. Then she left the window, and Dyneley, finding the knocker, performed on it as loudly as a Belgravian flunkey, only with much more impatience of entrance. There was considerable delay, and an amount of talk on the other side of the door, such as is customary in small households when an unexpected in-road is made upon their domestic peace. The bolt was then drawn back, and the door cautiously opened by a Scotch housemaid, prim and plain, no very inviting sou-brette, with "Avaunt thee! thou art an Ishmaelite," written on her brow, as Dyneley briefly stated the case, and asked if he could see her master for a moment.

"Ye canna; he's gane oot," was the grim reply.

"Can I see any one, then, who will direct me my way back to Glenmist?"

"I douna say, sirs; ye'd best gang aff as ye came," she answered, almost closing the door.

"My good woman, is this your Highland hospitality?" said Dyneley, impatiently. "I tell you, we have lost our road. Can't you tell us, at least, which way we ought to take?"

"What do those gentlemen want, Elsie?" said a young, clear voice.

By George! it was the little bedroom beauty herself, coming out of a room into the hall, with the identical fuchsias round her head.

"Gentlemen! I ken they're some lying loons," muttered the female Cerberus. "Keep awa', Miss Lilla, the wind's cauld."

She was closing the door in our faces, but Dyneley pushed it back with one arm, entered, and, raising his cap, apologised to Miss Lilla for the intrusion, and explained to her how we stood lost on the moors, we knew not how many miles from Glenmist.

She looked up at him earnestly as he spoke—I dare say such a specimen as Dyneley wasn't often seen up there—and answered him unhesitatingly.

“You have lost your way? Pray come in and rest till my uncle returns. He will be back soon; he's only just gone round the farm, and will be most happy to put you en route again.”

She spoke as naturally as a child, but with as much good breeding as Lady Constance at a levee. We thought our lines had fallen in pleasant places, so accepted the invitation joyfully. Not so did Elsie hear it given.”

“Miss Lilla,” she muttered, angrily, “are ye daft to daur let in these laddies, and yer uncle awa', too!”

“Silence!” said Lilla, with an impatient gesture; “Show these gentlemen into the drawing-room, and send Robbie to see for my uncle.”

“By Jove! Monti,” whispered Dyneley, as he took off his wet plaid, “this high-bred little beauty and her drawing room, with this antiquated portress, and an uncle who's out on his farm, is an odd anomaly. I say, drop the title here; let me be Graham Vavasour, as I was at Eton, will you?”

“If you choose, but I don't see why.”

“I do, and that's enough,” said my lord, shortly, as we entered the drawing room aforesaid, a long, low room, simply but tastefully arranged, with no consoles, mirrors, statuettes, or Buhl cabinets about it, but still with a nameless something of refinement, and in it the diamond of the desert, our wild gowan of the moors. Dyneley introduced himself and me with a certain charm of manner he possesses, which takes with every woman living, when he chooses to exert it, and would, a witty Rosière once told him, have won that chill bit of propriety, Penelope herself, into forgetfulness of her wandering lord.

The little Highland châtelaine was easy to talk to. She was lively, unaffected, and not shy; indeed, her manners would have done credit to a débutante of the best ton, so young and natural was she. She told us her uncle was a tenant of Lord Fitzcorrie; her own name Lilian Cardonnel; she did not like Scotland, she said, it was so cold, so dull.

"You have not lived here always, then?" said Dyneley.

"Oh no," she said, with a look of horror at the idea. "Till the last six months I have lived in Italy—dear, dear Italy. You cannot tell how I love it. The skies are so blue, the sun so bright there."

"From Italy to the Highlands!" cried Dyneley. "What a change! You must feel your exile as much as Mary Stuart did."

Her eyes looked pitifully sad as she said, with a laugh,

"Yes, like Rachel, I shall die with Camille's words on my lips:

Albe, mon cher pays et mon premier amour."

This was growing very amusing, and we could have cursed her uncle's advent cheerfully, when shortly afterwards he came in and interrupted us.

Dun Cairn was a tall, stern-looking fellow of fifty or so, with a keen, honest physiognomy, his manners rather formal and stiff, but heartily hospitable. He was a curious contrast to his niece—He could have acted Virginius, on occasion, I should say, if he had chanced to live in those severe ages—but he was a very good host to us, pressed us to supper, offered us beds, would not hear of our stirring out in the storm that had now set in, and said he was delighted to show any attention to friends of Lord Fitzcorrie's. So to supper we went, to a table full of Highland dainties, whisky, and XXX, as

good as we should have had up at Glengrouse, and little Lilla did the honors with as much grace and self-possession as any one of the Castle belles. Dyneley is reckoned very proud: so he is to pretentious snobs. He has made many enemies for life by declining to know nouveaux riches, and by putting down that detestable, stuck up, yet always servile, noblesse of money. But he will be courteous to a sweep where he would snub a duke, and to Duncairn, whom he found to be a sensible man, who tried to make himself out no more than he was, Dyneley was cordial and charming. To be sure, looking on him were a pair of very bright eyes, and the beaux yeux level rank while their spell is on us, though he, the well-known Eastern traveller, wayward author, and blasé peer, was probably above such weaknesses. Duncairn was a man of few words—guano is apt to sodden brains—but Lilla made up for the deficiency; her tongue ran on about fifty topics, and she really talked well, too.

“Isn’t there a Lord Dyneley staying somewhere in the neighborhood?” asked Lilla, at length.

“Yes,” said Graham. “Do you know him?”

“No; but I know his books, and I love them. Don’t you? Besides, I have read in the reviews of his restless wanderings, his great talents, his wild adventures, till I have an intense curiosity to see him. Is it all true?”

“That he has led a strange wild life?” said Dyneley, with grave tranquillity. “I believe so, and of course, having run over the whole of the globe, he has met with some few adventures. But as to the reviews, you mustn’t credit them. Some paint him in much too glowing, others in too satanical colors, though most likely he has more of the demon than the angel about him, like all the rest of us men.”

“And is he handsome?” asked Lilla.

"Some women tell him he is. I don't think him so myself."

"But gentlemen can never judge one another," she said, laughing. "I want dreadfully to see him. I wish they would put his portrait in the *Illustrated*. Do you think they will?"

"I'm afraid he's not célèbre enough for that questionable honor," said Graham, smiling. "He'll never be a lord mayor, you see, or a pet preacher. Perhaps, if they want to fill up a corner, they may stick in an imaginary picture, and put his name under it. But if you really care for his portrait, Miss Cardonnel, I will ask him to sit to me. I know him very well, and he will in a moment, if he knows the honor you do him."

"Will you?" cried Lilla. "Oh! thank you, Mr. Vavasour. How charming that would be! I have engravings of Bulwer, and Thackeray, and all my darlings up in my room, and I should so love to have Lord Dyneley, too. What an incessant traveller he has been! Meeting him on the high road, one might say to him, as they said to the Chevalier de Boufflers, 'I am happy to meet you *at home*.'"

"What a little wonder that is, to be found in a Highland farm-house," said Dyneley, when, shown up to our rooms, he came into mine to have a last pipe. Lilla had not in the least objected to tobacco, but stayed in the fumes of the Cavendish, laughing and talking, though Dyneley would have gone without his darling nicotine rather than offend her olfactory nerves, if she had not threatened to leave the room if he did not follow Duncairn's example, and take his meerschaum—a threat which soon induced Graham to light it. "'Pon my life, Monti, she's very entertaining, and her manners are so graceful, exactly the *juste-milieu*, neither shy nor bold,

though I dare say some fools might misconstrue her frankness and vivacity. She must have been brought up in good society. How on earth does she come to be buried here, poor little thing?"

"She seems to interest you," said I.

"Yes, she does. She puts me in mind of finding a flower up among the snow on the Aigre."

"Quite poetic!"

"Don't be sarcastic, Monti; that's *my* line. I haven't much poetry left in me, thank Heaven; it's an unprofitable commodity that the world estimates very low indeed. Before I knew the world I wrote sonnets; now I know it, I write satires."

"Nevertheless, you seem so struck with this little wild gowan, that we may live to see you writing 'Glenmist braes are bonny,' à la Douglas of Finland, yet."

"And keeping faithful to 'Annie Laurie,' who jilts me and marries Craigdarroch? Thank you; I don't think that is much like my rôle. I'm afraid I have been more sinner than victim in the matter of faithlessness."

"So the poor gowan will find, I'll bet. With such a romantic beginning, you can't reject the goods the gods have sent you."

Dyneley laughed. Then he said with his pipe between his teeth, "No! I'll be merciful for once. I won't brush the dew off your gowan, as you call her. Who's poetical now, I wonder? Neither you nor I would do the poor flower much good."

"Very possibly; but neither you nor I are much given to pausing for that consideration."

Fresh and fair "the gowan" looked when she came down to breakfast, unconscious of our remarks concerning her, and beamed on "Mr. Vavasour" a bright good morning smile. With Lilian Cardonnel it was not her

face, though that was pretty enough, nor her brain, though that was clever enough, but, as we say of Piccolomini, it was her *ways* that had such a charm for us. I have heard ladies very spiteful on the little Italian because we say so, and so I dare say they would have been on Lilla, had any known her, ladies being generally addicted to those "nice *quiet* girls, whom *they* like because *we* don't (I never heard one woman praise another unless she could damn her with that detestable little epithet "*quiet*")"; but, as it was, fortunately Lilla had more lenient judges, and Dyneley's and my verdict, when we bade her good-by, was "charming," and infinitely too good to be buried away in the solitude of the moors.

After breakfast I went with Duncairn to see some prize heifers of his. Dyneley, who never cares a straw for cattle and corn, preferred the entertainment indoors, where they got on very well, I dare say, for when we came back she was sitting on a low stool, with Mousquetaire at her feet, and he was leaning over her, looking at her drawings. She had never been taught, but had real talent, as became a native of Rome, and they were as good friends as if they had known each other twelve months. When we started homewards, Lilla offered to guide us to the top of the hill about a couple of miles' distance, whence we could find our way to the glen, and a very pleasant walk we had with our lively little cicerone. We were quite loth to part with her when we came to the hill. Dyneley stood still, and watched her run down the slope homewards as fast as a greyhound. When she reached the bottom, she turned too, to see if he was gone. He took off his cap to her, waved his hand, and came on with a smile on his lips.

A couple of nights after we dined at the Castle, and

plenty of chaffing we got for having lost our way on the moors.

"So a tenant of mine gave you house room!" said Fitzcorrie. "Did you see little Lilla? Of course you did, though. Trust you to be in the same house with a pretty woman and not ferret her out!"

"Oh yes," said Dyneley. "I saw her, and a pretty, dear little thing she is. But, by Jove! Fitzcorrie, she's utterly out of place there. How does she come to belong to a farmer, of all horrible things? She must have some gentle blood in her veins."

"You're right, old fellow," said the Viscount. "Though it's certainly a good idea to ask me for the genealogies of my tenants, I *can* tell you something about that. You've heard me talk of poor Charlie Cardonnel; he was a great chum of mine in the old college days, and there couldn't have been a better fellow if he hadn't been so miserably romantic. Well, one luckless Long, Charlie came to shoot with me up here, and became dreadfully spoony over Duncairn's sister Lillian. She was the beauty of Argyleshire, and Charlie, poor dear fellow!—you'll hardly credit it, I dare say—was actually fool enough to marry her—*marry* her—a yeoman's daughter! To marry young, we all know, is one of the greatest evils that can betide a man, and to marry beneath him damages him still worse; but do it he did; why, I couldn't say, nor he either. Six months after, of course, he was sick of her; six years after, naturally he met somebody else, and wanted to break his chains. Break them he couldn't, so he ran away with his new love, and her brother shot him through the heart. Poor dear Charlie! a man had better take to drinking, racing, gambling, rather than take to romance. Lillian had nothing to live on, and herself and her daughter to keep. Served her right for entangling poor

Charlie! So she took a tumble-down palace in Rome, and let rooms to English visitors, till she died five years ago, when an old Italian Comtessa took a fancy to the child, and brought her up till *she* died too, and Lilla came over to Duncairn. She's very like poor Charlie in look, and manners, and mind. The Cardonnels, of course, never notice her. I have got Florence to ask her here occasionally for her father's sake; but it's difficult to take up one's friend's child, who is one's tenant's niece, too, and I don't think my lady likes her."

"I dare say not," said Dyneley, sotto voce. "Well, she's a nice little thing. I wish her a better fate than her mother's."

"Yes, she is certainly chic," said Fitzcorrie, "notwithstanding the plebeian blood of the distaff side. I should be sorry you'd seen her if I didn't know you were too old a hand to commit yourself à la pauvre Charlie."

"I should say so. Romance has been beaten out of me long ago; and a good thing too, for I couldn't afford such an expensive luxury."

Soon after we went into the drawing-room Lilian came on the *tapis* again. Lady Fitzcorrie and Adeliza Vandeleur raised their eyebrows, and smiled the smile with which women sneer down an enemy of their own sex.

"What, are you talking of the farmer's little niece? Do you admire her? Really! She was here at the tenants' ball last Christmas; I remember noticing her. She is not so gauche as one might expect, is she?"

"Gauche!" repeated Dyneley, with a peculiar smile. "I think I never saw manners more graceful."

Adeliza's haughty under-lip protruded. "Indeed! I had fancied I had once heard you were fastidious, Lord Dyneley."

"So I am," said Graham sipping his coffee. "I should say no man more so."

"Do you mean that girl with golden hair, that Lord Fitzcorrie called Lilla when she came here last Christmas?" interrupted Constance. "I thought her lovely; she played so brilliantly, too."

Dyneley leant down over her chair. "Lady Constance, you show me a miracle: one Helen has the generosity to toss the golden apple to another."

"You bitter satirist! Why should not women praise each other?"

"I don't know why they *shouldn't*, but I know they never *do*. At least, never without some qualifying rider," laughed Dyneley. "Will you give us some music? Sing me my favorite, 'Io son ricco.' Willoughby there will be charmed to accompany you."

"No, pray don't trouble him. I beg you won't," said Constance, hastily; but Dyneley had already crossed over to where Claude stood leaning against a console, talking to nobody, with a look of dignified ennui, as if he was longing for a "new sensation," and couldn't for his life find one, and, taking him by the shoulder, brought him up to Constance, very much against his will, I fancied.

"I am very sorry Lord Dyneley disturbed your dolce," she said, not looking at him, and playing listlessly with her fan. "I suppose, Captain Willoughby, when there is no sunshine in society brilliant enough to attract you, you retire, like the moles, into a state of quiescence; they call it sleep, you call it ennui, but it appears to me much the same thing."

"But the moles are better off," said Claude, in his most languid voice. "You know they have holes to go into, and we haven't; we're constantly being bored by

being woke up and asked to do something fatiguing. But if you want me to sing, I don't mind."

The tone, lazy as that in which was uttered the memorable words "the Tenth don't dance!" the air tranquilly rude, which Lady Fitzcorrie justly stigmatised as "out-Brummeling-Brummel"—which no man in the Service knew better how to assume, when he chose, than did Claude—made Constance's eyes flash, and her color flush deep.

"Wish you to sing!" she said, carelessly. "What could make you dream that I did? I wouldn't inflict the exertion upon you. Pray go back to the dolce; there is a remarkable comfortable chair in the inner drawing-room, and you need have no pangs of conscience, for when the moles abjure society, nobody misses them, you know."

"Thank you," said Claude, stroking his long moustache. "You were very kind to think of that chair; I'll go to it at once."

Go to it he did; and he sank down among its cushions, but enjoy the dolce he didn't, for Lady Fitzcorrie was there, who has no objection to a flirtation with a handsome cavalry man; and they flirted away, till the Viscount, who was a bit of a George Dandin in his old age, would have been bitterly wrathful if he hadn't happily been deep in whist in the card-room, where Dyneley soon joined him, while Adeliza looked very chagrined at his desertion, and her sister sang duets with Curtis and with me as if she were aspiring to the *rôle* of prima donna. I was standing by her at the piano when Claude came up to bid her good night. As she turned, he knocked down a song; he picked it up, and a bitter smile came on his face as he laid it on the piano. Constance turned pale, too, as he put it down, and said, with a laugh, "That used to be a favorite of yours, Lady Constance, but newer music has

come up since, and we are not so cruel as to expect fidelity from ladies."

I glanced at the title of the song: it was "Wert thou but mine own, love;" and on it was written, in Claude's writing,

"L'amour sait rendre tout possible,
Au cœur qui suit ses étendards.

"Somerleyton Feb. 16th."

I thought I began to see into Master Claude's hand, carefully as he held his cards.

IV.

THE GOWAN OF THE MOORS GROWS MORE ATTRACTIVE THAN
THE GAME.

"WHERE'S Dyneley?" said Curtis one afternoon, some three weeks after, when he and I were out after ducks at the pools; "gone to see that gold-haired Highland belle of his again, I suppose. Poaching on one manor spoils shooting on another; but there never was such a fellow for 'large blue eyes and fair white hands.'"

I laughed. "I dare say he's up there. Shall we go and see? It's getting dusk."

"Do," said Curtis, "I want to see her. Romer and Ashington have found her out, and they say she's pretty enough to make Adeliza strychnine her. Do you think that will be a match between Dy and the Vandeleur? There's plenty of tin for Dyneley."

"Can't say. She's willing, no doubt, and he's no money to speak of; it may come off, though I doubt if

Graham will ever put on the handcuffs matrimonial. We're not very far off Duncairn's now. Come along, and give the guns to Ronald."

An hour's walk brought us to the farm, a long, low, rather picturesque house. Elsie, looking upon us with much suspicion, showed us into Lilla's little drawing-room, where we found Dyneley sitting in the broad window-seat, and Lilla by him, in her customary low chair, looking up in his face while he talked earnestly to her. For the first time, I think I may say in my life, he looked anything but best pleased to see me. He was expatiating on one of his favorite topics, the great fault of the day, Intolerance—not of anything warmer—but with her speaking eyes fixed on him, and her quick intelligence answering him, I dare say he was wrathful at being interrupted. *She* looked sorry, too, and showed it, which he didn't, he having had twenty years' icing in society, and she none. She received us, however, in her graceful, lively style, and Curtis studied her with more admiration than ever I saw in him for the belles of the "Ride and the Ring." Dyneley leaned back against the window, and didn't vouchsafe much conversation, save when Lilla appealed to him, which was certainly about once every three minutes; and Curtis did his best to amuse her: he's a very pleasant fellow, too, when he likes. It was quite a levee for her; and I dare say the little Queen of our Argyleshire Balmoral enjoyed it.

"Won't you come to morrow?" she said to Dyneley, when he shook hands with her; looking very earnest about her request.

He smiled. "We'll see."

"Ah! then I know you will; and when will you do Lord Dyneley's picture?"

"He hasn't sat to me yet," said Graham, "but I cer-

tainly will not forget it. However, you'll be disappointed in him. You fancy him a demigod, and you'll find him a very mortal indeed."

"I do not care; I know him in his writings," said Lilla, decidedly. "I never judge a man by his life, but by his heart; circumstances may make the one, but nature has formed the other, and if it be the right metal it will always ring true."

We laughed involuntarily, but Dyneley looked grave; perhaps he was thinking his had not always rung as true as it might have done to his boyish dreams of hope and energy, ambition and success.

"Miss Cardonnel," said Curtis, bidding her good-by, "I wish very earnestly that you would make me the same request you did Vavasour there. I'd come at your call."

"What a paladin!" laughed Lilla. "It is quite a pity you didn't live in the days of the Round Table, and Elaine and Morgue la Faye."

"One does not need to go back so far for fairies," said Curtis, with an eloquent glance.

Dyneley made an impatient movement. *He* never compliments by any chance.

"But really," Charley went on, "May I, too, 'come to-morrow?'"

Lilla looked vexed, and hesitated. "If you wish, certainly, but it is a very long walk."

"My legs are as good as Vavasour's," said Curtis, laughing to hide the pique he felt; but if you honor him with the monopoly——"

Dyneley silenced him with a flash of his dark eyes.

Lilian looked haughty and dignified. "If Mr. Vavasour," she said quickly, "is so kind as to walk eight

miles that I may have the pleasure of talking my dear Italian once more, I am not so vain as to suppose that all his friends would take the same trouble."

"Nor do you care that they should," thought I.

"Well, Dy, I congratulate you on your game," said Curtis, as we went home; "it's better than the blackcock, and more easily knocked over, I guess. Take care I don't poach on your manor, old fellow."

"If I had, to adopt your elegant parable, marked the game, I should know perfectly well how to secure it," said my lord, with a contemptuous twist of his moustaches. "But I consider Miss Cardonnel a lady, if you don't, and I do not speak of her as of a grisette of the Quartier Latin."

"Lady? So she is in manner, but a yeoman's niece! The devil! if one mayn't have a little fun with her, with whom on earth may one?"

"Try it, Charley," said Dyneley, dryly.

"Well, why not? By George! this is the first time I ever knew you so scrupulous."

"Possibly. You are young yet, and boys do not know that there are 'femmes et femmes.' When you have lived as long as I, you will know that a young girl, too frank and guileless to be a prude, too warm-hearted to be a coquette, is not to be confounded with the Aspasia's and Phryne's of our experience."

"I say, Gra," said I, as Curtis went on in front, "I thought you were going to be merciful and spare the gowan. Making love to her and marrying Adeliza won't——"

"Pooh! I never make love to her," said he, shortly. "She is clever, and amuses me to talk to; but anything beyond that would answer neither of us, for I certainly can't marry her, and I'd never abuse Duncairn's hospital-

ity. I tell you she's a fair flower, and I'll leave her untouched."

"Then I wouldn't advise you to go after her quite so much."

"Keep your counsel till you're asked for it, Monti. Poor child! she's no idea of love in her head for me yet, and I shall not teach her."

I laughed outright. "My dear fellow! I never thought I should like to hear a man of the world like you talk such bosh. The poor gowan, I pity her! *she's* doomed!"

Dyneley blazed away at a hare that crossed the path, and, I suppose, didn't hear my remark.

Next morning he left the blackcock after luncheon, and spent his afternoon in the wide window-seat in Lilla's drawing-room, talking Italian and reading Leopardi. And many afternoons went in the same manner, till Fitzcorrie and all of us laughed about the game Dyneley had found on the moors. Curtis, Romer, Ashington, and I often found occasion to shoot up in the direction of the farm, and would drop in for some of Duncairn's Prestonpans, to which the hospitable Highlander told us we were always heartily welcome. I fancy they all thought that Chaumière love and *coulisses* flattery would do very well for a farmer's niece, but they soon found that little Lilla, frank and gay as she was, required as refined a style as even Lady Constance, and consoled themselves for their disappointment by jests at her and Dyneley.

"I wish those confounded fellows wouldn't keep hanging about here," said he, savagely, one day. "There are women enough at the Castle, if they want them."

"Hallo! are we jealous?"

"Jealous!" repeated he, with scorn. "Of what, pray?"

"Well, if you repudiate the sentiment, what do you care if fifty men come round her?"

"Because I don't want her spoiled. She has no art, or concealment, or manœuvres now, and it is a pity she should be taught them."

"I don't see why Romer, or Ashington, or Curtis is more likely to teach her them than yourself; and if you won't have her either at Cupid's or Hymen's hands, and will bid her good-by in a few weeks' time, and will find her, if ever you come here again, the wife of some rich, thriving, hard-featured yeoman, it can't matter much whether or no she is spoilt a little."

Dyneley held his head in the air, playing impatiently with his whiskers. "Lilla marry a clod of the valley! Poor little thing, she'd better die first."

"Why do you never come up to the Castle?" I asked her, a few days after.

"Can't you guess? *You* can?" she said, turning to Dyneley, who bent his head in acquiescence. To begin with, I am very rarely asked; secondly, I know Lady Fitzcorrie dislikes to see me there; and thirdly, and chiefly, I am too proud to be treated as they treat me. I will go nowhere on sufferance, to be subjected to a condescension which is insult, to be scarcely spoken to, or, if addressed, addressed with that supercilious smile, which says as plainly as any words, 'Petite, how come you near us? go back to your proper sphere. My father was a gentleman, and I will never go anywhere where I am not received as a lady.'"

"Quite right," said Dyneley, looking admiringly at her animated eyes and gestures. "If they cannot appreciate you, do not honor them."

Lilla colored with pleasure. Poor child! it was his first praise. I dare say he thought it *was* quite right for

her not to go to the Castle, since it kept his star in obscurity, to shine only for himself. Othello's form of selfishness is an exceedingly natural and common one.

Nevertheless, he took Lady Fitzcorrie to task for not inviting her. She only answered him with a smile and a sneer, being afraid of his witty tongue; but I heard her say to Adeliza, "What do you think? Dyneley actually dared to ask me to invite that young person, as if *we* were to countenance and receive his Scotch grisettes!"

(N. B.—My lady had tried to hook Dy, and failing, out of pique had taken up with poor Fitzcorrie.)

Meanwhile, Claude and Constance either hated or loved each other very warmly. They were as distant as they could be not to be remarked, and he seemed, before her, to affect all the languor, indifference, and *nil admirari*-ism that he could.

"What is it between you two?" said I one night, when we came back from the Castle (he said he was not well enough to go,) and found him sitting by the fire, looking a most gloomy contrast to the dashing, flirting, light-hearted Dragoon I had always known him. "Come, tell me, old boy, what's Constance done to you?"

He looked very fierce at me.

"You've found it out, have you? I hoped I'd concealed my folly too well for fools to have it to mock at."

"Fools! Bien obligé. My dear fellow, what's the matter? what's it all about? You know

L'amour sait rendre tout possible,
Au cœur qui suit ses étendards."

Claude, the sweetest temper possible, glared at me as if I were going positively to take his life.

"Did she tell you that? Did she make a jest of it to you?"

“What are you talking about, Claude? Who’s ‘she?’ I merely read Molière’s lines on a song the other night in your handwriting.”

“I wrote that when I was mad,” said Claude between his teeth, poking the fire recklessly. “You know I stayed in the same house with that girl down at Somerleyton for six weeks. I admired her, and God knows whether she meant it or not, but she waltzed, and sung, and rode almost solely with me, and *I* thought preferred me to the other men. She never discouraged me. The night I wrote those very words on the song, she smiled and looked up in my face as only the most fond or the most artful woman can. I said nothing decisive to her, for I knew she was a great heiress and I had nothing, and my pride revolted from owing my money to my wife, or seeming mercenary in *her* eyes. So we parted. I went to join Ours at Aldershot, knowing we should meet in the season. I did meet her!—how do you think? I was leaning on the rails looking out for her; she passed me on her hack, riding with that idiot Cromarty, who’s dangling after her now. She gave a bow without a smile—after the hours we had spent together!—and cantered on.”

His voice shook, and he leaned his head on his arms on the mantel-piece. I was going to speak, but he stopped me.

“Hush! it’s idle talking. I was mad to suppose she would fling herself away on a poor cavalry man. You know my secret—keep it. I must get over it somehow, and end my days as soon as I can in some skirmish.”

With a dreary laugh, he bid me good night, and, taking my pipe, I mourned over the loss of one of the best fellows in the Service, caught and bound in those tight

rose-chains from which the blind god so seldom remembers to take out the thorns.

"Monti," said Dyneley, coming in out of the hall, "I wish you'd give me back that daguerreotype Claudet took of me when you were romantic enough to wish to have one when I was going into Arabia Deserta, and you fancied I might never come back. Will you?"

"Well, it isn't over-generous of you, but I'll send to town for it if you wish."

"That's a good fellow. I want it for little Lilla, and I'll have another done for you."

"So you're going to make the child waste her years crying over your daguerreotype? That's being 'merciful,' is it?"

"I promised her," he said, shortly, "and she shall have it."

"Very well, Gra," said I. "Don't take my head quite off. You've taken care to photograph yourself in her memory pretty indelibly, so she may as well have the picture."

The picture came down. Dy's clear-cut features, his black hair and whiskers, and eyes, came out strong in the photograph; he might pardonably feel vain when he looked at it, but he put it in his pocket immediately it appeared, and set off to Duncairn's. Lilla was looking for him, and let him in, kissed Mousquetaire most warmly, and smiled upon Mousquetaire's master. Without speaking, he held out the picture. She looked at the case in dismay.

"What! Lord Dyneley at last? How kind you are! But this is Claudet's name, it is not your painting?"

"Open it," said Dy, smiling.

She did as he told her; gave the picture one glance, and turned round to him, her face flushed and agitated.

"It is you!—*you*! And may I have it? May I keep it? Oh! why did you never tell me! To think that it is your thoughts I have so long read in your books! You, whom I have——"

"Lilla! Good Heavens! what is the matter?" said Dyneley, seeing, to his consternation, that she trembled excessively, and tears stood in her eyes.

"I don't know," said the girl; "only—you seem so much farther off me. I feel as if some one had taken you away."

Dyneley was more touched than he knew was prudent, and thought he had better end the scene.

"You feel too deeply, Lilla," he said hastily. "You will never be happy. I cannot stay now, for Montague is waiting for me at the falls. Keep the daguerreotype if—if it interests you; and, though I bear another name than you fancied, never think of me as other than—your friend."

"Monti," said he that night, "I shall leave this in a day or two. It's the middle of November, and I shall go down and look at Vauxley."

"By Jove!" said I, "a new move. I thought you'd have spent Christmas at the Castle."

"My dear fellow, I've stayed four months in the same place. That's an unprecedented halt for me. Of course you can all stop, if you like."

"Not I," said Claude. "My leave's up on the 25th."

"Confound Cupid," thought I, "for breaking up a nice set of braves garçons just as they are comfortable."

Two days after Dyneley lighted a cheroot, put on his waterproof, drew his cap over his eyes, and started off—you can guess where as easily as I did. As he opened the gate to the garden, Curtis came out of it. Graham looked fierce at him, for the young fellow had grown

very spoony about Lilla, and, despite his opinions at starting, was just as likely, being a young hand, to have committed himself, as Cardonnel had done before him. Curtis looked gloomy, and brushed quickly past him, and Dyneley drew his own conclusions.

"I met Curtis," he said to Lilla, when he had been there about ten minutes, and their talk had not flowed quite so fluently as usual. "Has he been with you? Yes? Then what has he said to vex you?"

"To vex me? Nothing."

"Yes he has, and to vex himself, too. I can guess what," said Dyneley, impatiently; "and you refused him?"

"Of course!" said Lilla, in surprise.

"You were not wise," said Graham, speaking hard through his teeth. "He is a boy, to be sure, but he is worth ten thousand a year. He has a very good position. Many women would sell their souls to be mistress of his wide acres; yet you refuse him without a thought."

"Hush! hush!" cried Lilla, vehemently. "You know well enough that I would reject him, and twenty such as he. You are cruel—unjust—ungenerous!"

"Nay, I spoke only for your good," said he, in a cold, forced tone. "Forgive me if I offended you."

"Offended me? *You!*"

He took her outstretched hands, and pressed them fiercely; then dropped them, and traced the carpet pattern gloomily with his stick. There was a dead silence. He tried to talk of a few trivialities, but could not get on well with them; in desperation rose, and said, without looking at her,

"I came to bid you good-by. I leave to-morrow."

She caught hold of his arm, and looked up in his face with the look of a stricken stag.

"You are not going away?—not for long? You will come back soon?—I shall see you again?"

Dyneley did not look at her face, or, even with his iron will, he would have found it difficult to answer as he did.

"I cannot say. I shall leave England—possibly for years."

Lilla uttered a cry like a hunted hare's; she would have fallen to the ground but for Dy's arm. He never wanted his self-control more, and he knew he dared not try it long. Before she could speak a word to him, or a look of her eyes shake him, he pressed her against his heart, kissed her passionately, and, whispering in her ear "Forget me and forgive me, if you can," rushed out of the house, and through the garden, like a madman.

We saw nothing of him that day. When he came home he said he was tired, and went straight up to his room. The next day he made his adieus at the Castle, foiling all Lady Adeliza's hopes, and, in a pelting storm, bade us good-by, and steamed away down Loch Fyne. The next thing I heard of him were a few lines to say that he was starting in the *Aphrodite*, and had not determined the route. Poor old fellow! his pride would not let him marry the girl; his feeling of honor prevented him returning Duncairn's hospitality by running away with his niece. He thought that in conquering himself, and leaving her, he was doing what was kindest and best for her. I doubt if to poor little Lilla the kindness was quite so apparent.

V.

THE LIGHT ON THE MOORS SHINES AGAIN FOR DYNELEY.

Claude was not, meanwhile, much better off. He, the dashing Dragoon, who had lost his heart and found it

again a thousand times in water parties and archery fêtes in Woolwich luncheons, Chatham balls, Exeter deux temps and Portsmouth galops, had fallen headlong in love during the long days and evenings at Somerleyton; and Constance's manner, sometimes distant or sarcastic to him, sometimes, when she thought he did not see her, silent and subdued; the constant sight of her beauty, and the attention the other men paid her, were not altogether calculated to cure him. I thought he might have been happier if he had sought an explanation; but nothing would induce him; he was too proud to risk a repulse. I thought I might as well act his *Deus ex machinâ*.

"I think you're very mistaken in not giving Constance some chance of an explanation," said I to him, as we went up to the castle the evening before he left. "If the girl does like you, and there has been any misconception, so haughty and all but rude as you are to her, she must think you don't care any more for her than you do for this mare."

"She knows better than that," said Claude, biting the end off his cigar fiercely. "How can I speak? If I were a rich man I would let my pride go hang, and speak to her at once; but what would she and everybody think?—that I was hunting her for her money, and pretending love, that I might build up the broken fortunes of my family with the wealth she would bring me. Were she penniless and I a Duke, I would risk her rejection to-morrow; as it is——"

He stopped, and blew a cloud of smoke into the frosty air.

"Oh the contradictions of human nature!" thought I. "Dyneley and his love are in the very relative position that Claude thinks would make it all square for

him; and yet they are not one whit better off than these two."

At dinner, Claude had the length of the table between him and Constance, so there did not seem much prospect of his following my advice. I, however, took her in and turned the conversrtion upon him.

"So Lord Dyneley is gone," she said to me. "What an agreeable man! He is so amusing when he likes."

"I'm glad you like him. There isn't a better fellow upon earth," I answered. "Yes, our party is breaking up. You leave next week, do you not? I must be down at my father's for Christmas, and Claude yonder joins the 14th at Dublin to-morrow."

Her hand shook as she set down her wine-glass. She evaded a reply. "Where is your place? Fawnham, isn't it called?"

"Yes, it's in Hants. I often hunt with Assheton Smith's hounds; and I have often heard how *you* have followed a fox in the next county, Lady Constance. I wanted Willoughby to spend Christmas with me, but his leave is up. You knew him before, did you not? Don't you think him much altered in eight months?"

She hesitated. "He seems as indolent as ever."

"Pardon me," I said. "I don't mean that, but his spirits are so gone down. He was one of the lightest-hearted, sunniest-tempered men possible, for all his pretended laziness; but now, I only hope he may't go off into consumption, as his father did before him."

For all her high breeding, the young lady was as white as her lace dress. Now I lowered my voice confidentially, likd a school-girl telling another of a Valentine:

"Can you tell me, Lady Constance—excuse my asking you, but I've known Claude so long, and esteem him so

highly—but do you know whether there was any one at Somerleyton who didn't treat him well, or of whom he seemed at all *épris*? for ever since that luckless visit he hasn't been the same fellow."

Her color varied—the bracelets on her arm trembled. Just then Lady Fitzcorrie gave the move : she rose hastily, dropping her handkerchief in her agitation. As I gave it to her she smiled and blushed (I wished Claude had seen that smile and that blush), and said, quickly :

"He is to be married to Miss Melbourne, is he not?"

"He? No; who can have told you so? What, to Miss Melbourne, that fat Australian heiress! My dear Lady Constance, he'd as soon marry a Red Indian; he is only too fastidious about poor *militaires* aspiring to any one with riches."

Her eyes danced, and she gave a quick sigh of relief; her glance dwelt on Claude a moment as she passed out of the room; he did not deserve the glance, for he had been flirting shamefully with Lady Fitzcorrie, but he caught it and his eyes flashed out of their tired languor.

"If you don't win the game it will be your own fault," I whispered to him as we went into the drawing-room. Constance was not there; the Viscountess challenged him to chess; Claude let her checkmate him in no time; and when it was over, regardless of my lady's annoyance, he lounged into the music-room. Adeliza and another lady, with Romer and Ashington, were singing glees. Constance was standing by the piano turning over some music, without thinking of what she was doing.

Claude went up and looked over her: her hand lay on

the memorable song. He took out his pencil and wrote underneath his former lines two others:

“Apprenez-moi ma destinée:
Faut-il vivre? faut-il mourir?”

She looked up at him—that was enough for them both. The glees went on a little longer, then we went back to the drawing-room. They lingered behind us, putting up the music. I glanced round as I left the room; her head was resting on his shoulder, and his moustache touched her hair, so I suppose they had managed their explanations in a satisfactory style.

“Well,” said I, as we drove back to the lodge, “I expect to be groomsman, *mon garçon*, for certainly I’ve made your marriage for you. Is it all right, pray, at last?”

“Thank God, yes; and you’re a brick, Monti,” said the gallant Captain, fervently. “You put it all square capitally, and I’m eternally obliged to you. Poor darling! she says she was just as miserable as ever I was when I left her at Somerleyton without a word. The idea of her money making me hesitate had never entered *her* head; and I can’t make her see that it causes the slightest barrier. When I went away, that confounded Adeliza—I always did detest that woman—told her I was engaged to Emily Melbourne (you know that dreadful girl with large feet and unheard-of tin, who dresses, too, in such awful taste?) and when they were a month in Lowndes Square I never went near them—you know I couldn’t, I was tied down at Aldershot—she began to think I’d only flirted with her, and in a momentary pique, that she’s regretted ever since, she bowed coldly to me in the Ring.”

“That’s the tale, is it?” A very good lesson to people not to ride off on an idea without seeking an explanation. She’s just of age, isn’t she?” I asked, having the practical

side of the thing in view, and not being in love myself. "So all the money must come to you?"

"The money, yes," said Claude, in disgust. "Her mother's her only relative living, and she'd let her do anything she liked. I wish the money were at the devil myself."

"You'd soon ask Satan for it back again."

"But the tin never crosses her mind," Claude went on, disdaining my interruption. "She said so prettily to me, 'Never let us speak of it. What is mine is yours. I know you would give me anything, and I would take anything from you. Surely you love me sufficiently to do the same by me.'"

I saw he wasn't likely to talk anything sensible that night, so I left him to his delicious thoughts, and was only profoundly thankful that he did not turn the dog-cart over with his headlong driving of the poor mare. Claude had to go to Dublin the next day, to his own intense disgust. He always used to bemoan early parade, and yet enjoyed a rough campaign. But Constance wrote to her mamma, begging her to accept an invitation they had had from the Viceroy, to which her mamma, being wildly idolatrous of her, and exceedingly curious to see Claude, immediately accepted. When she did see him, she fell decidedly in love with him herself, and being of good birth, though allied to Brummagem aristocracy, was better pleased with his gentle blood than she would have been with a long rent-roll. I went over to his marriage, which was on New Year's-day, and for the first time in his life he got up early without thinking it a hardship. We all told him he was the luckiest dog in the Service, to have won his love and twenty thousand a year by the same coup, and really on his wedding-day he was too happy to be indolent; he only swore at the breakfast as a horrid

bore and a most cruel probation. Dyneley, dear old fellow, who ought to have been there to season the affair with his sparkling sarcasms, was away yachting, Heaven alone knew where. An uncle of his had died, leaving him considerable property, but his lawyers could not tell where to address him. He was six months away. I began to get uneasy about it, for I thought he might be gone shooting to Norway, and would be very likely to go on exploring northward till he went a trifle too far into the ice-plains. At last, one night late, when I was sitting smoking in the Albany, to my delight I stalked Dyneley looking very ill and worn, restless and impatient in his manner—quite unlike himself.

“Where have I been?” he said. “To Barbadoes. I set myself so many miles to do, and, for fear I should break my resolution, I took out little Dalmaine, who wanted to join his troop.”

“And have you heard your good news?”

He looked up quickly.

“Good news for *me*? That would be a miracle indeed.”

“The miracle has happened, then. Old Chesney has kicked off, and made you his heir.”

“Are you certain?” he cried, vehemently.

“To be sure. It would be nothing extraordinary.”

He stood silent, leaning his head on the mantelpiece. At last, he looked up. I was astonished to see how happy he seemed, for he was generally very careless of money.

“Monti, I have farther to go to-night,” he said, hastily “I can’t stop with you now. Good-by, dear old boy, and thanks for your news. I shall see you soon again.” And, before I could stop him, he was gone again as suddenly as he had come.

As I heard afterwards, Dyneley, as soon as he left little Lilla, found out that he had not been with her four months without finding her winning ways and frank affection grow necessary to him. But having the strongest will of any man I know, he set sail, and compelled himself to be away six months, taking Dalmaine to Barbadoes, that in case his resolution failed him he should still be obliged to go on. All that six months his fiery and unwelcome passion grew and grew, as it does in strong natures, with absence or difficulty. Night after night he paced the deck of the *Aphrodite*, trying, to no purpose, to stifle it. It was not the slightest use. Love, in men like Dyneley, is not put away at a word, and he came back to England worse than he was before, with only one thought in his mind—to see Lilla. Farther he did not look, for though his pride now would have yielded, his want of money prevented his ever making her his wife. It was a fair, fresh May morning when he steamed up Loch Fine again, and saw once more the lovely woods and bays of Lilla's Argyleshire. His love, fiery as Bucephalus unbroken, made his heart beat quick with a thousand anxieties and vague fears, and his veins thrill with a longing to see her face and hear her soft fond voice. At a slashing stride he walked the ten miles from the shore to Duncairn's farm; the bodily exertion was a relief to him. He came to the very glen where we had lost our way; he saw the chimneys of the house far off down the hill-side. His heart stood still in an anguish of dread. She might be gone, she might be—— The last thought he shut out as too hideous to be endured. He drew near the gate, and thanked God when he saw her. He stood for a time behind a tree and watched her sitting on the steps of the window, her little thin hands and pale cheeks, with the total absence of all

the rayonnant brightness of expression once her peculiar charm, were a mute reproach to him. Poor child! she was looking at his picture. He pushed the gate open, and uttered her name. She glanced up, sprang towards him with a wild cry, and threw herself on his breast, laughing and weeping in an agony of joy. She looked up in his face, tears raining down her cheeks.

"You are come back at last. I knew you would. I have watched for you every day. Ah, you will never leave me again—promise me you never will!"

Exhausted with the intensity of her joy, she turned sick and faint, and her head drooped on his arm. He began to fear the shock might harm her; but joy never hurts any one permanently, and Dyneley's words and caresses after a time brought her to consciousness, though not for a very long time to calmness. But, in truth, I dare say, though he sets up for a philosopher, my lord was not so very much calmer himself, being, for all he may say to the contrary, of an enthusiastic, vehement, impulsive nature when he is roused.

"Ah! it was cruel to leave me," murmured Lilla, when they had grown a little more tranquil. "If you knew all the agonies of suspense, all I have felt when I knew not where you were, whom you were with, whether you were well or ill, happy or unhappy—if you could guess how the days dragged on from sunrise to sunset, and I watched for you, always in vain, and my brain whirled and my heart sickened with the longing to look upon your face—oh! if you had known all I suffered, I do not think you would have gone."

Dyneley thanked her—*selon les règles*: "Dear child, do you think I, too, did not suffer? I did what I thought best for you. Honor alone forced me from you then. Had I stayed another day in Scotland I could never have

left you. But when I was away from you, I felt to the uttermost how dear you had grown to me. I knew that as soon as I came to England I should come to you. Last night I heard of my inheritance of money, which enables me to marry; and to you, who loved me when you knew not that I loved you, you, who would have loved me through every trial and every sacrifice—to you I can now offer both my name and my home. Make me happy, Lilla, as, since my boyhood, I have never yet been.”

They were married in Argyleshire very soon after, for if Dyneley sets his mind upon a thing he never waits for it. She *does* make him happy. Her caressing, demonstrative, passionate devotion to him just suits him. He wants something strong and out of the common. One of your “quiet” retiring girls with their calm, domestic affection, would have bored him eternally—never understood, and never satisfied him. Anything cold, conventional, or inanimate in a wife would have distracted him, and driven him away from her in no time.

Vauxley is thrown open, and little Lilla shines brilliantly in her new life, which must be a curious contrast to that in Argyleshire. Women take her to task for her enthusiasm, her impulsiveness, and for a hundred thousand things, of course, because she is so delightful to us. The Cardonnels would now be very happy to notice her, and make many advances towards it, but he does not choose his little diamond of the Desert should be so taken up, and keeps them all at arm’s length. Dyneley’s chums admire her immensely—an admiration which, though she likes it, as it does credit to Dyneley’s taste, her exclusive worship of him prevents her appreciating and cultivating as much as Lady Fitzcorrie, no doubt, would do. Dyneley says he has but one fault to find

with her—she will pet Mousquetaire, and give him cream, and such-like injurious condiments; but the old dog is as game as ever, though he likes to follow her over the house as well as to follow the slot of a deer. Claude and his wife, Romer and I, and two or three other men, were down at Vauxley last September for the 1st, and very good fun we had. Altogether, my two friends have made a good thing of that autumn at Glennist, when they bagged *en même temps* BELLES AND BLACKCOCK. I often think, when I hear his clear ringing voice in the Lords, or his musical laugh in the hunting-fields—and he often says, when we sit in the smoking-room at Vauxley (into which sanctuary of Cavendish, Lilla, too, sometimes penetrates)—that he has good cause to mark with a white stone that memorable night when we lost ourselves in the mist, and—A LITTLE CANDLE OF THE MOORS LIGHTED HIM TO HIS DESTINY.

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HOW I WAS TRACKED BY
TRAPPERS.

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I.

THE ACQUAINTANCE I MADE ON BOARD THE "LORD WARDEN."

LAST spring I thought I would run over to Paris, a friend of mine, attaché to the British Legation, wanted me to see his mare Cantonnière run at Chantilly; so one morning I put myself in the express for Folkestone with a dear, dashing little widow (who was perusing *Bentley*, and asked me if I did not "think that fellow Ouida had been jilted by some woman, he was so spiteful on the beau sexe's shortcomings,") and got on board the *Lord Warden*, with Mills and the luggage and my bull-dog Pontos, who has a black patch over one eye, and might pass for a Chelsea pensioner in a state of Soul Transmigration. Much yachting has given me an ægis, thank Heaven! against any soupçon of mal de mer, and I leaned against the side of the deck looking at the passengers with Pontos looking out of his black patch, and making an inventory of them likewise, probably with a keen eye to business in the way of legs that might be snapped at with impunity. Pontos's mission in life was snapping at legs, and he naturally viewed people through that medium. Everybody looks through his own glass, be it a

burnt or a Claude one, and will be shot if he will look through anybody's else. Why might not Pontos, too? Canine snapping at enemies' ankles is not more dangerous than human snapping at friends' characters and reputations, is it? There were a good many people on board: there were Smith, Brown, and Jónes, of course, looking miserably ill, but talking of the Hopera and "'Ide Park" with sickly smiles. I never travel but I see *that* genus somewhere—wretched swells who make me ready to cut off my own moustaches in disgust, and dress in serge and sackcloth, when I see their horrible stubbly caricatures, and their shocking onslaught on taste and ties. There were pretty girls in hats lisping Longfellow's poem on The Sea and petting infinitesimal terriers with shy glances at us, to show how they would pet *us*, if we would let them. There were a bride and bridegroom, who seemed to find romance uncommonly slow work with a rough sea, and a hard-hearted steward, and a small storm of smuts from the funnel, which seemed as destructive to the lady's temper as they decidedly were to her bonnet. There was a *vieille fille*, who, on embarking, expressed her opinion that "it was beautiful," referring to the sea by that laudatory epithet, which fickle element felt the compliment so little, that, instead of returning it, it tossed her in ten minutes' time into the most complete antithesis of beauty that ever the female countenance could be imagined to present; and there was an odd, mean, little old man, who appeared everlastingly occupied in looking at *me*. There was nothing remarkable about me that I knew of—nothing odd, I trusted—certainly nothing suspicious; I was not got up so elaborately as my friends the swells, to be sure: I had on a wide-awake, and a ribbon tie, and a Maude of the simplest shepherd plaid possible. Nothing queer

about *them*, was there? But I certainly was an object of most extreme solicitude to this old fellow; he watched me furtively like a cat a mouse-hole, and finally sidled up, and began speaking to me.

"Rough sea, sir, isn't it?"

Now I was too much of an Englishman not to look upon it as confounded impudence for him to address me, but I was still cosmopolitan enough to consider it only due to courtesy to reply, so I compromised the matter by giving a monosyllabic rejoinder:

"Rather!"

"Great traveller, perhaps, sir—don't mind it?" As he got no answer this time, he tried me with something else: "Fond of smoking, I see, sir? Very nice amusement, I dare say, when it don't make one sick? Wish I could do it, but I can't. That's an uncommonly handsome pipe of yours, sir?"

My pipe *was* handsome, and a singular one, too inasmuch as the bowl was curiously moulded like a grinning faun's head, and I had had my crest put on it with my initials, and generally used it, though it was cumbersome in size.

"An uncommonly nice pipe," went on the loquacious little animal, eying me and the meerschaum as if we were something unparalleled and monstrous. "Going as far as Paris, may I ask?"

"No, sir, you may *not* ask, for it is no concern of yours," said I, knocking the ashes off the pipe, and looking at him.

I suppose my eyes expressed my thoughts, which were simply, "What the deuce do you mean by your impertinence?" for the old fellow gave a little chuckle, moved away, and I heard him mutter to himself, as if I were a runaway apprentice, and he was making out the items of

my *personnel*, "Six feet as near as may be, brown moustaches, aquiline features, shepherd-plaid scarf, wide-awake, meerschaum with a faun's head and the letters L. V. H. on the bowl. Worth taking down, and keeping an eye upon, anyhow. I'll ask madame what *she* thinks, Mighty stiltified! We'll see if we can't take the rise out of him." And the little man shuffled away, taking his mem.-book out. What for? Not to enter mine and my meerschaum's appearance, surely? I was not outlawed for debt, or a secretary of a Bible Society flying with the guineas of Christian supporters to spend them over the water, nor a bank director cutting a rotten concern to go and set up a dashing hotel in the Champs Elysées with the tin of deluded shareholders. Take the rise out of *me*? I laughed at the little wretch's oddity, as Pontos gave a low growl after the departing legs he had not been permitted to snap at, and I put my pipe in my pocket and turned to take a walk up and down the deck. My curious interlocutor had disappeared, into the cabin possibly, and I walked up and down unmolested, thanking my stars I was not that unlucky bridegroom who between his own sensations, his *nouvelle mariée's* temper, and the funnel's smuts, seemed to think he had better give up the ghost altogether, and find a watery grave under the paddle-wheels. And as I walked I saw, just coming out of the cabin, a lady, tripping across the deck as safely as if it had been a ball-room floor, and showing the most charming little brodequins in the transit, finally nestling herself among a pile of cushions, like a silky little dog in its basket (or a Nereid in the curl of a wave, my dear young sir, if you prefer poetic similes, in which case, *par parenthèse*, I would beg to refer you to Mr. Coventry Patmore, who carries poetry into the kitchen, and makes verses upon burst boilers and other domes-

ticities of a like character, with a ponderous playfulness quite marvellous—so marvellous that, like a certain dexterous coup d'état, we would rather not see it imitated, we think)—well, my lady was an exceedingly pretty little one, as pretty as her brodequins ; and as she lay curled on her cushions, with a French novel and a smelling-bottle in her small, plump, bien ganté hands, with her shining crêpé hair and her bright, sparkling, inquisitive eyes, like a marmoset's—and her pretty carnation cheeks and I was just thinking to myself what a godsend the bewitching little creature was, and going to address her with some common-place or other, pour commencer, when up she started, with a little scream, and both hands extended : “ Ah ! vous voilà ! Mon Dieu, comme je suis enchantée ! Nous sommes deux feuilles volantes, et nous voilà rencontrées par hasard encore une fois ! ”

Here was somebody who knew me decidedly, but where the deuce had I seen her ? She met me with the greatest animation—I might say ecstasy, if it didn't sound vain—she recognized me clearly, and, what was more, seemed delighted to do so, and I hadn't the faintest conception of ever having seen her face before ! There I stood, holding her hands of course, and looking down at her, wondering where the deuce I had met her, raking up every place I'd ever been in, from the Closerie des Lilas to the Salt Lake, and trying to remember every woman I'd ever seen, from the peeresses at Almack's to the cantinières in the Crimea. It was not a bit of use ; I didn't recollect her, and I couldn't, but I was scarcely going to tell her so, comme vous concevez, so I pressed her cream-colored gloves warmly, paid her a compliment on her looks, told her I was enchanted to see her—which was perfectly true, for I thought a little mild flirtation would while away the time very pleasantly in the train to Paris,

if she were going on there; and, finally, sat down by her, talking away as if we were old friends, without the faintest shadow of an idea who the devil she was. She might be a serene highness of Something-Schwerin; she might be a danseuse out of the Haymarket; she might be a foreign princess with countless titles; she might be a little adventuress with only paste rings; I didn't know, and, what's much more, I didn't care: she knew me, and was extremely pleasant with me, and was a gay, *légère*, agreeable, very pretty little woman—a dangerous one, very likely, on further acquaintance—but I had eaten too much wheat in my day to fear being caught with chaff, and I sat on the bench beside her, the envied of Brown, Jones, and Robinson, I doubt not, and talked away to this charming friend of mine, whom I'd never come across before, to the best of my own knowledge, though she was evidently as intimate as could be with me, so intimate that I began to think my memory must be failing me, or that the Bass I had taken at Folkenstone must have had a dash of Lethe in it, that I couldn't anyway remember those bright, brown, marmoset eyes, and that piquant *nez retroussé*, whose owner retained so flattering a recollection of me.

"Last August," thought I, "where the deuce was I? In Perthshire, I'd swear, knocking over the grouse with Fairlie. I haven't been at Ems for five years and more." But, *place aux dames!*—if they don't stick to truth we mustn't always be telling them so, or we should eternally be guilty of the rudeness of contradiction; so I asked her a counter query, if she thought it possible for any living man to forget any days he'd had the happiness of spending with her?

"*Fi donc, bécasse!*" she cried, giving me a blow with her ivory-hadled parasol, and laughing a gay, musical

laugh. "Do you suppose I believe that? Not a word of it. I remember you too well of old! Poor D'Aguilar, do you remember him that night at your *petit souper*—he had lost at the roulette—and what fun we made of him? Have you ever seen him since?"

"D'Aguilar? No, I don't think I have," said I. Now, to the best of my belief, I'd never known a man of the name, but he might have made an impression on her and none on me, so I let *that* pass and thought what a very pretty figure she was as she lay back on the cushions, taking the perfume from her flacon, which had Jockey Club at one end of it, and I've a shrewd suspicion *sal volatile* at the other, as certain clever Essayists we know of have refreshing rationalism for those who can appreciate it at one end of their pen, but a little drop of orthodoxy still at the other to assuage their bishop's qualms and preserve their social preferments. (Query: Is that their fault after all? If Truth paid a little better and Profession a little worse, shouldn't we have more of the one and less of the other? *Il faut vivre*, and so—men hold their tongues.)

"And are you going on to Paris, *mon cher*?" asked my new acquaintance, or rather my old friend. "Ah, you are, then? I am very glad of that, you can see me through that horrid *douane*, and we can go on to Paris together. And what have you been doing with yourself? losing your money after those stupid horses, and risking your neck after foxes, and making love to all the pretty women you've met, and forgetting me, your best friend?"

Now positively she'd hit so exactly on my occupations, that, with the greatest effrontery in the world, I couldn't have told her she was wrong; and as for forgetting her, I certainly had done that with a completeness only equal

to that with which your oldest chum who has gone to the Bad invariably forgets that "little bill," or that "mere bagatelle" he borrowed of you on the strength of the old Eton and Cambridge days. So I made her another pretty indefinite speech that sounded a good deal, but, sifted, meant nothing, as several speeches do, forensic, ministerial, post-prandial, and others; and while the *Lord Warden* puffed across the Channel, and Pontos snapped at each stewardess as she passed him, and the nouveaux mariés looked at each other as if in mute but stern demand why a Margate moon wouldn't have done as well as a Boulogne one for their lune de miel, my friend and I flirted pleasantly in that silvery Gallic tongue, best of all for coquetry or repartee, till the steamer ploughed her way into the Anglo-French port.

"Take care of my luggage a moment," said she; "I have left my handkerchief in the cabin. No! I would rather go for it myself."

And down she went, while I, with her maid, guarded the boxes, at which I hastily darted a glance and read, "Madame la Comtesse de Coquelicot."

"Coquelicot! Coquelicot!" I'd never heard the name in my life; but, however, I wouldn't tell her so. I was in for the acquaintance, and I knew very well how to take care of myself and my purse; besides, Madame de Coquelicot was very pretty, and extremely agreeable to me. As I was looking at them I thought I heard somebody say sharply, "Vous ne voyez pas plus loin que votre nez. Laissez-moi faire et je lui ferai voir du pays. Prenez garde qu'il ne verrouille pas, c'est tout ce que vous avez à faire!" I thought it sounded like my countess's voice, but it couldn't be, for she just then stood by my elbow bidding me take all the trouble, and mind the

douaniers didn't touch her boxes, or she would never speak to me again.

II.

HOW, NOT OWING A CENTIME, I WAS STILL PLUNGED INTO DEBT.

OF course I saw her through the douane and into the train, which was just starting for Paris, and got in myself. She was a very agreeable woman. No possible harm could come of a little civility to her on a journey; if she was a dame d'industrie, I wasn't a boy, to let her lighten my pockets; I had known too many comtesses baronnes, marquises. So I sat opposite to her in the same carriage with the rector, who wrapped himself in a great-coat and that customary hedgehog *noli me tangere* seclusion common to habitants of the Britannic Isles, and went to sleep, and a lady and her daughter, at whom—the girl beating her out and out for beauty—I saw madame cast certain contemptuous irritated glances. Did you ever see any woman look pleasantly at another if she was pretty, or speak well of her by any chance? I never did. Ladies may admit some possibility of virtue in a plain sister, but in an attractive one never. Teresa Yelverton has *our* sympathy and admiration, but wouldn't her own sex have loved to stone her if they *could* have found a flaw, for her one unpardonable sin, poor little dear! in being attractive, talented, and fascinating? Arria Poetus might be as pure, as noble, as self devoted as she would, but I don't doubt that the Roman ladies, en petit comité, hated her for the admira-

tion she excited, and tried their best to put some "bad construction" even on the heroic "*Poète non dolet*" of a nature too high and loving for them to be able to measure or understand, or do anything but vent their spite in throwing stones at it!

The train whisked on, and madame settled herself in her compartment, looking as fresh and as crisp and as charmingly got up as if she'd just come out of her *boudoir* instead of off the *Lord Warden*, and chatted away so familiarly that I felt quite sure she must have known me all my life, though to the best of my belief I'd never seen her till an hour before. She called me "*Mon cher*" and "*mon garçon*," and evidently was so well acquainted with me that it would have been a height of discourtesy to tell her the reciprocity was all on one side, as the Irishmen have it, and that I had no more remembrance of her than I had of the pointsman or the guard.

So we talked away very pleasantly, those quick handsome brown eyes of hers scanning me so intently when I appeared not to be looking at her, and professing themselves under their curled lashes so perfectly innocent of intending any such scrutiny when I did regard her, that I began to be a little *intrigué* as to what possible interest I could possess for her, and to think I must be a more interesting personage than I had ever flattered myself before. It was between four and five when we hissed and snorted and puffed into the Paris station, I put my little *comtesse* into a carriage that was waiting for her, a very dashing carriage, with a pair of fretting bays, three parts thorough-bred, that wouldn't have made a bad figure in the Ring, and had the tenderest *poignée de main* that ever such little cream-gloved fingers gave a man, as Madame de Coquelicot said most amiably.

"Come and see me to-morrow, mon ami. No! not this evening, I am too tired; but to-morrow as early as you like. The old quarters, you know."

"Where the deuce are they?" thought I, as I said aloud, "The old quarters? Let me see, what is the exact address?"

"Numéro quinze, Rue Belphégor-et-Mélusine, quartier du Diable Boiteux—don't you remember? Adieu, and au revoir!"

And madame waved me her hand and bade her coachman drive off, and I laughed as I turned away to think how entirely I'd forgotten my fair friend, or how cleverly the little woman pretended to an intimacy with me, for some purport or other, that remained hidden in the leaves of fate. "I'll see that farce to the end. I'm not a young bird to be trapped and plucked, and she's certainly pretty enough to take the trouble of calling on her," I thought to myself, as I walked to the voiture Mills had summoned. As I jumped into it I dropped my stick. Somebody picked it up, and as I thanked him, I saw it was the little man whom I had snubbed so uncereemoniously on board the *Lord Warden*. "You are quite welcome sir; good evening," he said, shuffling off to his own cab. And when I was set down at the rooms where I generally stay when in Paris, who should stand on the pavé, watching me curiously, but the old fellow again, or his ghost—a very seedy-looking ghost, too, with a disreputable air, redolent of Whitecross Street, Leicester Square, Homburg, and all refuges for those whom fortune won't smile upon, and whose characters are usually purified with the ablution known as whitewash—watching me, certainly watching me, though he did his best not to be seen. Why had I all of a sudden become so extreme an object of interest to people? Did they

take me for the Comte de Chambord come to steal surreptitiously into the Tuileries to take the crown from that clever fellow who is his own *deus ex machinâ*, and seems to have stolen Atropos's scissors and to be snipping the thread long and short, as it amuses him, for everybody in Europe? Did they fancy I'd come to fire off bombs like Orsini, or to dabble in giant frauds like Law or Mirès? Had I anything odd about me? Had I murdered anybody without knowing it? entered into a conspiracy without remembering it? become a célèbre without being aware of it? joined a secret society and broken my oath without recollecting it? The people of the hotel didn't seem to find anything peculiar in me; they recognised me, indeed, but in no unpleasant manner, as their recognition resulted in as good a dinner and as choice wines as ever gladdened a man's soul, over which I forgot all about the acquaintance on board the *Lord Warden*, and after which I drove to the Jockey Club, found up my old chums, went to the Opera to see a new danseuse in "Satanella," supped at the *Maison Dorée*, and finally went back to the *Hôtel de Londres* in the grey of the spring morning, which was just light enough for me to see two men dodging me from the café—which it was easy to do, for my driver was an Alsatian and sleepy, and let his horse creep at his will—two men whom I heard whisper,

"C'est lui—sans doute c'est lui—au moins à perte de vue. Il faut faire le bec à monsieur——"

I lost the rest; but what the deuce did they know about me? and to whom were they going to give a cue as if I'd escaped from a lunatic asylum and was required to be recaptured? It was too dark to see, but one of them looked deucedly like my little old man of the steamer; but what possible interest on earth could I

have for them? I owed no man anything, nobody could pull me up for debt—not even for a case of Hayanas, or a pair of gloves, unpaid for; it was vastly odd to be dodged in this style, as if detectives were at my heels for embezzlement. But I was too tired to think much about it, so I turned in and went to sleep, by no means uncertain that I shouldn't be woke up like Changarnier in the middle of the night, and marched off by gendarmerie, possibly to find myself located in Brest, or Toulon, for some capital crime of which I'd forgotten being the perpetrator.

When the morning rose, I remembered my engagement to Madame de Coquelicot, my pretty little friend who knew so much about me, and of whom I knew nothing, and was just going into my coffee, omelette, claret, sardines, and all the rest of it, and looking over the *Times* and the *Charivari* in my own room preparatory to calling on her, when Mills tapped at the door.

"If you please, sir, there's a man here who wants to see you."

"See me! What for?"

"He says he wants to see you about some wine, sir—three dozen of Marcobrunnen as is owing for."

"Owing for? Nonsense. Never bought any Marcobrunnen by the dozen in my life. He's made a mistake; go and tell him so."

"I beg your pardon, sir, but he says you *do* owe it him, sir, and he won't go without it," said Mills, returning.

"Deuce take his impudence! he's made some mistake, I tell you; he must have the wrong name."

"No, sir, he hasn't got the wrong name; leastways, not wrong as the French would pronounce it. He asked me for Monsieur Hervey, and here's the bill if you will please to look at it."

"Take the bill to the deuce," said I, "and don't come bothering me. I don't owe a centime in Paris; tell him so, and that if he doesn't go about his business we shall call in the police."

Mills departed on his mission, and I lighted my meerschauum to have a quiet smoke, but peace was not for me: there came another tap at the door, and Mills ventured in again, every lineament of his countenance replete with injured dignity and noble indignation.

"What's the row, Mills? Won't the fellow go?"

"Yes, sir, *he's* gone; but, sir, he had the impudence to say he'd have the law upon you; he did, indeed, sir, for a paltry three dozen of hock!"

It was the horrible insignificance of the debt that overwhelmed Mills. If it had been a few thousands, now, he wouldn't have felt lowered by it; he was accustomed to live with gentlemen who, if they got into difficulties, got into them *en roi*, and who, if they went to the dogs, drove on that unpleasant road *au grand galop*, with postilions, and outriders, and all the rest of it, *comme il faut*.

"For a debt I don't owe! that's a good idea. He'll have to prove my identity first, and his own claim afterwards. What you mean by listening to such fellows I can't imagine, Mills. You should send them to the right-about without coming to trouble me."

"But, sir, if you please, sir, there's another one now—from a M. Follet's, of the Rue Vivienne—about some coats and vests, sir, that he says you had of him this time last year.

"God bless me! are all the Parisians gone mad? I owe no debts here—not a sou. It's a pleasant thing, certainly, if tradesmen can saddle foreigners with bills in this style! What the deuce do they mean by it?"

"Then you won't look at the bill if you please, sir?"

"Certainly not. It is nothing to me. Go and turn the fellows out this moment, or let them find their right debtor. This is a pretty state of things! to be besieged by creditors the minute one sets foot——"

But my peroration was cut short. Through the door which Mills had left open a little burst a wiry, excitable, voluble, and indelibly wronged little man, who pounced upon me with wild alacrity.

"Ah, monsieur, vous voilà attrapé! Payez-nous cela—cinq cent quatre-vingt-douze francs. Voyez vous! voilà une année entière que nous vous avons attendu. Cinq cent quatre-vingt-douze francs. Regardez le mémoire: un habit, un Talma, un——"

"Allez-vous en!" said I, repressing a strong impulse to laugh—an impulse which, I believe, lowered me irremediably in Mills's eyes. "Allez-vous en! je ne vous dois pas un sou. Je ne suis jamais entré dans votre magasin. Comment osez-vous——"

"Quoi!" shrieked the little emissary of M. Follet. "Vous ne nous devez rien? Oh, monstre d'Anglais! vous ne nous devez rien? Mais regardez donc le mémoire!"

"Au diable le mémoire, et vous aussi! Quittez ma chambre à l'instant, ou j'appellerai," began I, taking my pipe out of my mouth, fairly exasperated. "Mills, why don't you turn that fellow out; he is subject to the law already, for assaulting me in this manner." The little fellow did not wait to be turned out; the bully and the coward generally unite in one person, they say, and I suppose the vision of single combat with two monstres d'Anglais was too much for him.

"Vous avez refusé de me payer, et vous m'avez menacé. C'est bien, monsieur! Nous verrons!"

And he clattered down the stairs, signed thither in a lordly and imperious manner by Mills, as fast as his little feet could carry him; and as he went we heard a diminuendo cataract of "Affreux menteur!—Abominable scélérat!" &c. &c., in his shrill, vociferous, little voice, and I told Mills to get my hat and gloves, thinking decidedly that Paris folk had gone mad, and that I had become the special object of their insane fury. I'd fallen into a nest of people who evidently knew more about me than I knew myself, and I wondered if I should find any Q. E. D. to the problem at Madame de Coquelicot's, as I got into a Hansom and bade the driver take me to No. 15, Rue Belphégor-et-Mélusine, quartier du Diable Boiteux, of which fashionable faubourg, if you are ignorant, I beg leave to hint that you know nothing of Paris.



III.

HOW I FELL AMONG THIEVES.

It was a very handsome house, but one which, though madame had alluded to it as old quarters very familiar to me, I had never been in, to my knowledge. I inquired for madame. The porter answered, "Oui, monsieur, elle est chez elle, Montez au premier, s'il vous plaît;" and au premier I went accordingly, where I was received by an exceedingly resplendent valet who appeared to know perfectly who I was without my telling him. The deuce, I thought, it was uncommonly odd everybody knew me here, and I could recollect nobody! But I had no time to reflect upon it, for the valet flung the door open, and I

was ushered into the presence of my Comtesse de Coquelicot. If she had looked charming on the deck of the *Lord Warden*, she looked ten thousand times more so now, sitting in a *dormeuse*, clad in the daintiest *négligé* possible to devise, with cobweb lace about her throat and wrists, and gold-broidered slippers on her feet, as pretty a *tableau* as a man could want, reading her yellow-papered roman, and stirring the cream into some chocolate that stood on a little silver service by her side: a very pretty *tableau* indeed—too pretty, surely, for me to have so utterly forgotten it if I had ever seen it before! She rose to meet me with her hands outstretched, and so sweet a smile, that I could scarcely fail to greet her with equal warmth.

“Well, *mon cher*,” said the Comtesse, seating herself, giving me a delicate blow with her roman, and signing me to a chair by her, “so you have kept your appointment, and come to see me?”

“Do you suppose any man could fail to come and see you if you’d let him?” said I, thinking to myself what a deucedly pretty woman she was without her bonnet.

“Ah, *béta*! you have been long enough without coming to see me,” laughed madame. “It was very shabby of you, *caro*, to run off from Ems as you did!”

“Run off from Ems! Decidedly the little woman’s mad,” thought I.

“We were very happy at Ems, *caro*!” sighed madame, with a pretty pathetic air. “Isn’t it a pity that *beaux jours* like those won’t last for ever?”

Of course I answered her suitably, to the effect that any days in her society must be the *plus beaux jours* of his life to any man, and our *tête-à-tête* was going on à *ravir*. I was completely bewildered by her constant references to a past with which I ought to have been as well

acquainted as she, but of which I could not, for the life of me, remember a word: but, as I said before, she was far too pretty a woman for any man to disclaim a friendship she claimed with him, and we were going on à ravir, when every nerve in my system received as violent a galvanic shock as ever any luckless *rus in urbe* received at the Polytechnic, and I started as though the most horrible douche that ever the water cure gave to any victim surrendered to its grasp had struck me with an arm of ice, when my little comtesse, looking at me under her fringed lashes, and closing her soft warm hand on mine, whispered, sweetly,

“Mon cher! would it be inconvenient to you *to pay me those seven thousand francs you lost to me at écarté last August?*”

I am a cool fellow generally, I believe; used to flatter myself that nothing could startle me; that if I possessed nerves in common with the rest of humanity; they were of that texture commonly denominated cast iron; but I can say so no longer, for when the Comtesse spoke those words, a child, had there been one in the room disposed to so pugilistic an enterprise, might have knocked me down. Plon-plon’s fit of eloquence could not surprise France, nor their sudden notoriety bewilder the Bishop of Durham and his beau-fils, nor the Seven Essayists’ free speech amaze the legend-loving Church, more utterly than Madame de Coquelicot’s speech surprised, bewildered, and horrified me. I stared at her, and mechanically re-echoed, “Seven thousand francs—I—lost—to you!”

She shook her head at me, and gave me another rebuking blow with Le Brun’s yellow volume.

“Ah, méchant! Do you pretend to forget it? Fi done! for shame! You recollect well enough!”

“On my honor, madame——”

She shook her head again, and laughed, gaily :

“Ah, bon Dieu! your honor, mon cher, is not a very wonderful witness. If you’ve no better gage than your honor, mon garçon——”

This was going a little bit too far: we *do* let women say more than men, but there are limits to one’s allowance even to the female tongue. I shook off her hand, and got out of the chair.

“Madame, you do not know what you are saying, nor can you, I think, know whom you are addressing. There must be some very extraordinary mistake here. On my word, as a gentleman, I never——”

But she interrupted me with peals of laughter.

“That will do, très cher! You do not know what you are saying, or you would scarcely try to talk that nonsense to me. You will say you never played écarté at all with me, I suppose, next?”

“To the best of my knowledge, I decidedly never did, madame. I repeat, again, that you are speaking under some very extraordinary delusion.”

“Do be quiet, bécasse; you make me laugh too much!” cried the Comtesse, beginning to look rather angry, though with a nasty glitter in her eyes, beating an impatient tattoo with her spoon on the Sèvres saucer. You may generally know your suppressed vixen by that sort of angry rataplan: she beats an inanimate object when she would love, if she could, to be beating you. “I like you very much, mon ami, but I did not like your running off from Ems in my debt, and I don’t like your pretence of ignorance now. I shall be very glad if you will pay me those seven thousand francs without delay, for I am extravagant—comme vous savez bien—and they will fill up a little gap nicely.”

"But, by Heaven, I owe you none. I never played *écarté* with you in my life. I was never at Ems last August——"

"Hush, hush, hush!" cried madame, her tattoo getting fiercer and her laugh louder. "What will you say next? Never played *écarté*! never at Ems! Grand Dieu! what next?"

"Anything you like, madame; and, first of all, that I am not a boy to be tricked in this way, and be frightened into paying a debt I never contracted. I suppose I have been fool enough to come amongst a gang of swindlers, but I am not so great a one as to stay amongst them. Another time, madame, try the trick on some younger bird, though it is an *adroit* one, I admit, and allow me to have the honor of wishing you a very good morning!" said I, backing to the door, too disgusted with my own tomfoolery in coming there at all to remember courtesy or anything else. Tomfoolery, indeed! As I put my hand on the lock of the door I found it was fastened on the other side, and that I, who ought to have known better than to have come there at all, was, as I richly deserved to be, a prisoner in the Comtesse de Coquelicot's drawing-room.

She nodded her head with devilish delight, laughing again, though her dark eyes scintillated angrily.

"The windows are twenty feet from the ground, *mon cher*. Ah! *bécasse*, now we have caught you again, do you think we should be so silly as to let you go so easily? Have you quite forgotten all those little bills and bonds at Ems, *caro*?"

"Bills and bonds!" I repeated, contemptuously. "On my life, this is carrying the farce too far! You mistake. I am not your victim, madame," said I, only keeping myself cool by recollecting my combatant was a woman.

"I shall be obliged by your putting an end to this, and ordering your servants to unlock this door. I presume you are aware that by detaining me thus, the law——"

"The law! Ah! you wish for the law. *C'est bien!*" cried madame, clapping her plump and jewelled hands.

I suppose it was a preconcerted signal, for a door I had not noticed at the other end of the salon opened softly, and a man curled and ringed, a Jew all over, came noiselessly in, with another insignificant fellow, neither of whom had I ever seen before, and, coming up to me and laying his hand on my shoulder, the latter whispered the lively and agreeable information,

"Monsieur, in the name of the law, I arrest you."

"Arrest me! The deuce! What for?"

"For the several sums of seven thousand francs, twenty thousand francs, and fifteen thousand francs, borrowed in the months of June, July, and August, from Alcide Mathieu," began the fellow, with such abominable legal precision and audacity that, à la David, the fire kindled and I spake more furiously than perchance was prudent.

Shaking off his grasp with a jerk that span him off into the middle of the room, "What the deuce do you mean by this tomfoolery? I owe nobody a sou, and you know that as well as I do. You are a league of rascally sharpers, but if you fancy to trap or frighten me into admitting your charges and letting you pick my pockets, you are exceedingly mistaken. You are a gang of swindlers, and as such I will cite you before the——"

"Oh, *l'effronté!*" shrieked Madame de Coquelicot. "Mon dieu! who could think any living mortal could have such audacious impudence, when he knows——"

"Knows!" chuckled the individual of jewels and curls,

who I conjectured was the aforesaid Alcide Mathieu. "Something he will know when——"

"Doucement, doucement, madame," said the miniature Vidocq, who, having got me into the griffes of the law, was scarcely going to let me off so easily, "Take care, or you will commit yourself for libel as well. Diantre!" said he, turning to me, "it is of no use resisting. Come, monsieur, do not oblige me to make a scene. Come with me quietly, like a gentleman. You have given us a great deal of trouble. If you would have settled these little matters privately with Monsieur Mathieu six months ago——"

The cool impudence of the fellow positively stunned me. I, who had never seen any one of them in my life, to be told I had given them a great deal of trouble, that I should have settled these little matters—little matters, forsooth!—six months ago! I, who flattered myself that I was a cool hand, and knew life, if anybody knew it, to have let myself be trapped into this by that little demon, De Coquelicot! The devil within me was roused, and nothing short of knocking them all down would have cooled me in the least. As the fellow came up to lay his hand on me again, I set my back to the door and prepared to receive them scientifically.

"If you attempt to lay a hand on me again I shall knock you down. You are a gang of swindlers, and if you refuse to unlock the door, I will throw open the window, call in the police, and give you into custody——"

"Ah ha! that is your game!" said the man, with a smile, moving himself to the window and giving a low whistle, while M. Mathieu, with a laugh, laid his grasp on my arms to pinion them behind me, and the Comtesse lay back in her dormeuse, laughing shrilly in concert. But that was rather too much of a good thing. There

are limits to human endurance, and before he could touch me, I knocked him over with a tap on his face.

"Ah ha! for debt, for assault, for libel," murmured the other man, with a purr of enjoyment at the prospect of three such charges combined against one individual, as the door behind me opened with a jerk that made me stagger forward, and I fell helpless into the stern grasp of two gendarmes, who, I presume, at their commandant's whistle, had come up-stairs to cope with so bellicose and restive a prisoner.

"Will you go quietly now, monsieur?" asked he, while my soi-distant creditor rose slowly from the floor, wiping the blood from his face and head with muttered oaths of vengeance.

It was no use *not* going quietly. I didn't want to blacken my name by being shown up in an assault like some tipsy youngster. It was no earthly good talking sense to these rascals; they'd the best of it at present, and the only way to get the game into my own hands was to state the case to some sensible judge, who would give me a hearing and listen to the circumstances. Of course, in no court could they make out their case, and it was a perfect bewilderment to me what sort of game they could mean to be playing, or why they should have pounced upon me as the victim of it—an Englishman only just landed in France, of whom they couldn't possibly know anything. So I went quietly, and the whole of the Rue Belphégor-et-Mélusine, from the sixième to the rez-de-chausée of each domicile, appeared to me to have turned out to witness my convoy by gendarmes. There were ladies opening the jalousies to peep at me, children running out on the balconies to laugh at me, gamins loitering in the gutters to make fun of me, grim porters coming to the grilles to stare at me, while

I swore *sotto voce* like a trooper at my own confounded folly in letting myself be trapped by that odious little Coquelicot, when there were fifty handsomer women in Paris, too! into such a ridiculous and apparently inextricable a scrape. However, I went quietly, not exactly enjoying my new position, but making the best of it with Tapleyan philosophy, consoling myself with the reflection that I should scarcely be put out of the world, like Mrs. Dombey, without making an effort, and that I, an Englishman, with friends by the dozen among the French noblesse and at the British Legation, would scarcely let myself be treated in this style without kicking up a dust about it, even if that dust were the whirlwind that should blow up the Anglo-French alliance.

It was three o'clock before I was taken into court, where, or by what rules, on my life I hardly know now, it was so bewildering an affair that I took little note of particulars. The interval was passed by me as you, my sympathetic reader, can easily imagine, in much such a state of virtuous indignation as the Z. G. lion exhibits when his keeper makes him wait too long for his dinner. There were my accusers: the fat man with the jewels and curls, desperately, villainously Jewish, with a bandage on his forehead, which afforded me fiendish delight; there was pretty, gaily dressed, highly rouged Madame de Coquelicot, as witness, I suppose; there was my old man of the steamer; there was the wine merchant's agent; there was the tailor and his emissary; there was everybody arrayed in grim and inexorable array; and there was I, charged there with debt, assault, and libel. Wasn't it pleasant? and, for the commencement of a first day in Paris, hadn't it a nice *couleur de rose* aspect? How bitterly I swore at myself! Surely those oaths were as pardonable, under the circumstances, as Uncle Toby's!

I'd never been in a French court in my life. I didn't know who was who, nor how the proceedings were likely to commence. Somebody—I think the judge—eyed me fiercely. I dare say he thought me a hardened sinner; perhaps he'd been a refugee in his time, and been had up at Bow, or Westminster, and enjoyed the opportunity of retaliating a little on a son of Albion. He began in a stern voice:

“Vous, Léonce Victor Hervé——”

I put up my eye-glass and stared at him—an act which he seemed to consider an impertinence. I wonder why. I've put up that self-same eye-glass at some of the best women in the peerage, at her Majesty herself, lounging on the rails or driving down the Ring, and none of *them* took it as an offence.

“Hallo, sir,” said I, “wait a minute. That isn't my name.”

“Do not address the court in that impertinent manner, sir. What do you intend to imply by so singular a remark as that it is ‘not your name?’”

“I mean what I say, and there's nothing singular about it,” said I, heedless of the indignation with which everybody was regarding me for venturing to interrupt the court. “It's *not* my name. I'm an Englishman, and am called Leonard Villiers Hervey, as you can see in my passport; and as my friends—the British ambassador himself, if you very much prefer him—will swear to you at any moment. I have been brought here on false pretences, charged with false debts, under, as I see now, a false name. It is either a conspiracy or a case of mistaken identity. In either circumstance I shall expect to be indemnified for the trouble, annoyance, and insult to which I have been subject this morning, or shall I decidedly complain to the British Legation of the abominable

manner in which a British subject is liable to be treated by a gang of French swindlers the moment he sets foot in Paris."

I hurled my words at him in the fiercest passion I ever was in in my life. I certainly astonished an audience then, if anybody ever did. The judge stared, the gendarmes stared, Madame de Coquelicot, the man of curls and rings, the wine-merchant, the tailor, everybody stared at me in my passionate peroration, and I caught the Comtesse's gasping whisper:

"Qui aurait pu croire qu'il y en eût un autre qui ressemblât tant à Léonce, et qu'un Anglais pût si bien parler le Français? Ah mon Dieu! je vois trop tard que ses yeux sont gris au lieu d'être bleus!"

It was a case of mistaken identity, luckily not so fatal to life or reputation as such a case has been more than once to some poor devil pulled up for a chance resemblance to another spirit worse off than himself. Two of my best friends—one French, one English—to whom I had sent, entered just at that minute, and corroborated my statement, which after some delay and trouble, with sight of my passport, sufficed to clear me from the charge of M. Léonce Victor Hervé's debts, though I am bound to say that the vigilant gentleman before whom I had been brought was desperately reluctant to let me go, and as intensely anxious to make me in the wrong, if he any way could, as any lady to talk away the character of her pet friend, or democrat to saddle a nobleman with all the sins of the Decalogue, and wouldn't let me off till he'd gone into it all from beginning to end, about fifty-six several times, in an examination which, frightfully as it bored me, afforded me much unchristian delight, by the

evident torture it was to my persecutors, whose characters were probably not such as to render legal investigation highly acceptable. It seemed that M. Mathieu was a money-lender, brother to Madame Coquelicot, a widow, but not of a Count; that in the August before, at Ems, a luckless fellow had borrowed of the one, been bewitched by the other, and, I presume, been so driven to desperation between them that he had cut the concern, and fled unseen from Ems, owing the little widow his play debts, and her brother several sums, which M. Mathieu had lent him, knowing him to be a man of some fortune, and for which he held his I. O. U.s and bouds. They were sharps, sans doute, but probably M. Hervé must have been rather a disreputable fellow too, and their anxiety had naturally been to catch him again and sue him. The little fellow on board the steamer was a man sometimes employed by them to hunt down their lost prey, and who, when he saw me on board the *Lord Warden*, with a meer-schaum and a Maude, like those M. Hervé was in the habit of sporting, duly notified the fact to Madame below in the cabin, who, coming on board, recognised me at once as she thought, and set her little wits to work to enthrall me in her fascinations till M. Mathieu should have legal traps ready, setting the old man to watch me wherever I went, who, in turn, apprised a wine-merchant and a tailor of my arrival, whom he knew to be creditors of poor Hervé, receiving, of course, a per centage for his information. So ran the story, simply enough, intensely as it had bewildered me, as it still bewildered Madame Coquelicot, who could do nothing during the examination but sniff at her flacon, and murmur, in humiliation, “*Mon Dieu, comme j’ai été bête ! Pourquoi n’ai-je pas remarqué que ses yeux étaient gris ? Mais la ressemblance est extraordinaire tout le même ?*”

They sued me for assault, and I had to pay M. Mathieu something heavy for the pleasure of knocking him down; but I sued them for false imprisonment, so I had a *quid pro quo*, and we were quits. My fellow sufferer, with a Maude, a meerschaum, and a face like mine, I have never seen to my knowledge. I have given you noms de plume, pour cause; but I look eagerly out in the streets, at the clubs, at the Opera, in the parks, anywhere and everywhere, for anybody that may bear a resemblance to me, for I have a keen sympathy with M. L. V. Hervé; I can exactly fancy how that little demon of a Coquelicot bewitched and robbed him, poor fellow, as she'd have bewitched and robbed me if she'd had the chance; and if any gentleman reads this who owns a pipe with a grinning faun's head, who fell among thieves at Ems, and played too much *écarte* with a charming little woman with a nez retroussé and bright marmoset eyes, I shall be very happy to make his acquaintance and condole with him and tell him farther particulars, *vivâ voce*, of HOW I WAS TRACKED BY TRAPPERS, in a case of mistaken identity, and THE EVILS THAT CAME FROM A MAUDE AND A MEERSCHAUM, innocent things enough, in their way, Heaven knows!

N. B. I learnt one lesson—learn it, too, ami lecteur: When Ulysses is travelling, he'd better keep to his *Times*, his Bradshaw, and his pipe, wrap himself in his plaid, and not let himself be brought out by the fairest Calypso, however dainty her cream-colored gloves, however bewitching her syren voice. But I fancy the advice is perhaps superfluous. Britons are safe enough to be silent on a journey, and put all their porcupine quills out—even to a woman!

TRENTE-ET-UN.

TRENTE-ET-UN;

OR,

TWO RIVALS.



I.

THE ACQUAINTANCE I MADE IN THE TRAIN TO BADEN.

WE had just stopped at Epernay to take the customary glass of champagne.

“Wretched stuff, isn’t it?” said my sole *compagnon de voyage*.

“Abominable! as bad as the worst gooseberry ever palmed off with an unblushing Sillery seal and an exorbitant price by that upright and incorruptible class the British merchant,” I answered, laughing, and looking at him for the first time.

He was a fine-looking fellow, probably about thirty, with golden-colored hair and regular features, that would have charmed Lavater save for a something, one could hardly say what, that told a physiognomy of irresolution. With a vacillating man I never had any patience yet. If Esau choose to be foolish and sell his birthright (and when you are hungry I can quite fancy a savory mess

being more attractive than an indefinite heritage,) I like him to do it with a dash and a spirit and a will of his own, not to stand shilly-shallying between the two, hankering after the one, yet wondering whether the other is not better, till all steam and flavor is gone out of his mess, and, like the dog of Æsopian fame, he loses both meats in that fathomless river which washes wavering purposes far away into that bottomless sea, where idle regrets lie buried never to be recalled.

He laughed.

“What class is upright and incorruptible? Not the much-vaunted middle class, I am sure. If we want swindles, frauds, and unlawful extortions, we must go, then, for most of them to the manufacturers, who lecture on ‘Probity’ at the Mechanics’ Institute, and grind their Hands down to destitution and a strike; the parsons, who trade in livings against their ordination oaths, and weep in their pulpits as our actors on their boards, to draw crowded houses—I mean churches; the great surgeons, who sentimentalise at committees over the good they are permitted to do, the suffering Heaven allows them to alleviate, and operate, knowing it will be useless and fatal, just to pocket the hundred-pound fee. If the middle class is so beautifully moral, ’tis a pity it isn’t a trifle more honest. Do you smoke? Try one of these.”

“Thank you. You’re going to Baden, I suppose, as I am?”

“Yes, it’s the Queen of Bads, isn’t it? One can’t tire of Baden; those two poplars at its entrance are two sentinels that won’t let in the worry and boredom of the work-a-day world into its Armida’s gardens.”

“No, but it’s a pity some of its golden apples are rather Dead Sea fruit,” said I, laughing. “One can’t help obeying that witching mandate ‘Faites votre jeu,’ ”

but one pays a devil of a price for those confounded little cards sometimes."

A certain impatient shade went over his face, as if he, too, had paid a devil of a price to that Circe that lurks under the tempting green tables, but he laughed.

"Well, is there any pleasure for which one doesn't pay some time or other? Montaigne says, on the footsteps of every enjoyment there follows a satiety that looks *almost* like penitence; but satiety's better than monotony without excitement. Don't you think so? It would be better of the two to die in one's cups than of hypochondria. I would rather have been Dick Steele than Cowper."

"Certainly I do. I like my curry hôt, and wouldn't give a rush for it without plenty of sauce piquante; en même temps, there's a medium between no pepper at all and such a lot of cayenne that it excoriates one's throat."

"Perhaps. But when one has the sauce piquante, as you call it, in one's hands, one's very apt to take too much of it. I defy anybody to stand quietly by in the Kursaal, and help backing the colors; and, if one pays as you say, one pays for excitement, and that is worth more than most of the things we buy, and our gaming's not worse in its effects than that gambling legitimised in England and patronised in the Stock Exchange. We only ruin ourselves; those great gamesters may involve thousands. Ah, here are the black and white bars. We've crossed the Kehl, then. We shan't be long before we reach Ooes."

"Are you in a hurry to get to Baden?" I asked, innocently.

He smiled a little consciously, I thought.

"Oh, no; but I am expected there for dinner at seven, that is all, at the Badischer Hof."

"By some fair lady, sans doute, or you, wouldn't be in such a deuce of a hurry to get over the ground so fast,"

thought I, as he lapsed into silence, smoking his Manilla and turning over the leaves of a *Galignani*. I liked him: I have a knack of liking people at first sight, which has led me into a good many pitfalls before now, but of which I shall never break myself, I believe, to my grave. He interested me, I did not know why, and when he offered me a seat in the carriage that waited for him at the station, as I was going, too, to the Badischer Hof, I accepted it willingly, though we Englishmen *are* as shy of chance acquaintances as a rat of a lurcher, and freeze ourselves into statues at a moment's notice if we are insulted by a civility from somebody we "don't know."

"Pray don't thank me. I am most happy to have brought you here. Good-by. We shall meet at the Kursaal or the Conversation, or somewhere, to-morrow," he said, as he turned to a waiter. "Quels sont les appartemens de Lord Trevanion ? montrez-les moi," and went quickly up the stairs. I followed him, the rooms I had bespoken lying in the same direction, and as the man threw open the door for him of one of the salons, I saw a woman rise and meet him with an exclamation of delight. I was right as to the cause of his impatience to reach Baden, and I laughed, as I dressed, to think how secure we are to guess aright if at the bottom of every weakness, mischief, madness, or folly, one suspects—a woman!

It was one of Baden's fullest seasons. Royal princes were as plentiful as trout in April, and cabinet ministers in dégagé morning toilettes took it easy for once in the year; statesmen, ministers, and literati, betted at the Jockey Club, punted at the roulette-table, chatted with Vivier, and jested at Emile de Girardin's. There were the handsomest women of the Belgravian haute volée, and the most charming of the "société Française." M.

Benazet's ingenuity was taxed to the utmost to furnish every divertissement that could be devised; and in the land of sunshine, music, gaiety, and fashion, a *bonâ fide* invalid, carrying a burden, of dyspepsia or phthisis, would have looked as out of place as a theological article in a lively magazine, or those new glass trucks of Bibles, with their vendors shouting texts as the tinman calls "Muff-eens!" or the gardeners "Buy flors all a blawin!" as we see them just now in our London streets, thanks to Exeter Hall, who, though it hisses theatres, and calls their managers servants of Satan, is not above copying their mode of placard and advertisement.

Baden was full, and I met plenty of people I knew in the Conversation the morning after I arrived. Almost one of the first I saw was my fellow-traveller, whom I encountered on the staircase, with the lady of whose welcome of him I had caught a glimpse, and in whom I recognised Eva Boville, an intimate friend of my sister's, a daughter of old Trevanion's, who, it seemed, was just recently engaged to the man whom I had met in the train. He was one of the Chesterfields of Dorset, a family as proud as Lucifer but as poor as beggars, who had lost their coronet fighting for the "White Rose and the long heads of hair" with Derwent-water and Dundee. He was an attaché to one of our legations; a fellow that won on you strangely, I couldn't tell you why, a mixture of sweetness and recklessness, of gay spirits and extreme depression, that never made you certain of what mood you would find him in, and yet made you like him in all, against your better sense, and be as tender over, and tolerant of him as you would be of a woman. His was a love-engagement, that was plain to see. He loved Eva Boville, I believe, as dearly as a man could; he was proud of her, of having won her, with her beauty, her

grace, her birth; he was never weary of her society; he cared for no other woman, and the greatest beauties in Baden passed by him unnoticed. But there was one thing I fancied he loved as dearly, perhaps more dearly than he did her, and that was the fatal syren, the charmed Circe, the resistless fairy, who beckons us to the green tables, and hands us a cup that, if we taste it, we cannot set down, as delicious as brandy, as seductive as opium, as dangerous as absinthe—the Circe that lies in the whirl of the Roulette and the chances of Trente-et-Un. She had no rival in her own sex, but I fancied she had one in the all-seductive syren of Chance, that sits behind the croupier's elbow in the gas-lit salons of the Kursaal. I was but too right!

“Don't go to the gaming-rooms, Cyril,” I heard her whisper to him, that night, in the ball-room at the Kursaal.

He laughed: “Why, my dearest?”

“I don't know; I can give you no good reason, perhaps; but I have a horror of them. One of my uncles, years ago, when there were hells in St. James's-street, gamed away all his fortune at Rouge-et-Noir, and shot himself in despair.”

“I won't make so tragic an ending,” laughed Chesterfield, though he gave a half-shudder as she spoke. “He hadn't what I have to bind him to life. I could never despair while I have you.”

“But do promise me—do. I never tease you about anything—but if you would promise me this!”

He looked fondly down into her eyes, but shook his head, laughingly. “No, I am not fond of promising. I would never break promises; and one can never be sure how far one may be able to keep them. There is the music again—are you ready?”

He whirled her round in a waltz, and I dare say soon made her forget his refusal. Women, at one kind word, forgive us fifty unkind ones, and, like spaniels, lick our hands for a single caress, and pass over all the blows before it. He put her into her carriage very tenderly that night, and bent his head for a farewell touch of her lips as he gave her her fan, and stood looking after her as they drove away; but, ten minutes after, he joined us, and was punting at the roulette with reckless eagerness. Oh, the women who trust us! it's well for them they don't see us when their backs are turned! Fair amie lectrice, when you lay your glossy head on your pillow, picturing your dearly beloved Charlie smoking a solitary cigar, looking at your photograph by the starlight, and dedicating all his midnight thoughts to you, if you could but see how he passes the small hours, and how very agreeably he can console himself for your absence, I wonder if you'd give him such a sweet smile when you hear his step on the staircase next day? But, *soyez tranquille*. Charlie may love you very well for all that; it is only that the leopard cannot change his spots, and you, being a little lamb, cannot understand his liking for lairs that have no attraction for you.

Chesterfield played recklessly, but his good and bad fortune ran pretty evenly, and he did not lose much.

"Didn't I hear Eva ask you not to play?" I said, as we left the Kursaal together. A rapid cloud passed over his face:

"You did. She is right, no doubt: it were wiser, possibly, to cut the place altogether; the infernal intoxication will get the better of me some day, and I shall beggar myself to my last sovereign. But I cannot resist it all the same; the longing for its excitement comes to me as the craving for drink, I suppose, to drunkards. I don't

care a hang for the money I win when I have won it, but for the *hazard* I could stake my life at times. I would not give my promise to her for worlds; I dare not; I should break it if I did."

"Yet," said I, "I often think what a set of fools we are to fling our fortunes on the turn of a wheel, the color of a card. I love play, like you; but, on my life, it might make one shun it to see those poor devils who have hung about the tables all their days, who have lost their wealth, and their lands, and their peace, waiting on its caprices, yet still stand hovering there, playing the game in imagination, hugging in fancy, as Paul d'Ivoi says somewhere, the gold which they haven't a shilling left to try and win, and hungering for the hazard to which they have lost all."

"True enough. And to think one may some day be like them!"

I stared at him and laughed. "*You, vraiment!* I wonder how Eva Boville would relish a ruined gamester for her husband!"

He turned very pale in the gaslight, and stopped me impatiently. "Hush, for Heaven's sake! Jests are very near truth sometimes." Then he laughed that very silvery laugh, that oughtn't to have had any dash of bitterness even in it. "I'm not ruined yet quite; and some men make very lucky coups, you know, at the green-table. Good night, my dear fellow! How bright the stars are; brighter than our gaslights! My cigar's gone out; give me a fusee, will you?"

II.

HOW THE TWO RIVALS FOUGHT FOR EMPIRE.

“OH! the gay dalliance of our life in Egypt!” as Cleopatra has it in Mr Tennyson’s dream of fair women; how pleasantly the days went by in amusing, bewitching, ever dear, never dull Baden, where we kept the ball ever in the air; and that lover of good things, Catullus himself, couldn’t have complained of being bored if he’d been amongst us. The *crème de la crème* of Europe, from emperors to authors, from diplomatists to belles, had congregated there, and the Austrian band in the Kiosque played merrily through the summer days, and the gaslights of the crowded Kursaal burned bright through the summer nights, and we laughed, and flirted, and betted, and played, and left ennui and misanthropy behind us, for once, in the light, pleasant atmosphere of the Queen of Bads, where M. Benazet burned electric light for the delectation of his guests, though all the rest of the world might be consigned to darkness and tallow candles; and with the private theatre, the Jockey Club, and the Conversation, Rouge-et-Noir, Roulette, and a charming Comtesse Clos de Vougeot, who being a little Legitimist, vowed she hated me for having that Suisse parvenu, that Empereur Tibère’s *croix d’honneur*, but made her hatred more pleasant than most people’s love, I enjoyed that August exceedingly. Staying myself at the Badischer Hof, where Chesterfield had not been able to get rooms, I saw a good deal of the Trevanion family, and of him. Trevanion himself was an agreeable fellow, who lived more than up to his income, which was limited for a peer’s; his wife was equally pleasant,

to my taste at least, though some did say she was horridly proud; but, to be sure, *they* were women who were not in her monde, and envied her style (private pique, mon ami, lies at the bottom of most things), and Eva I had known ever since she was a child—she was not much more than one in years now—and there was about her something so soft and spirituel that you would no more have thought of using her roughly than of taking a hatchet to cut down a harebell. Chesterfield wouldn't, at least; gentle to everybody, he was inexpressibly so to her. There was but one thing that rivalled her, and held sovereignty with her over him—his other idol, Trente-et-Un. The more I saw of *him* the better I liked him, not that I always sympathised with him, tout au contraire, he used to make me think angrily of “Unstable as waters, thou shalt not prevail;” there was something bizarre and changeable that I do not like in anybody, yet, deuce take him, he fascinated you, as a woman might who bewitched you against your reason, and somehow made you like him, with all his weaknesses and mutations of mood, more than many better, or at least more reliable men. It was very queer, but he had a sort of painful interest for me: he seemed to me one on whom Nature had lavished all her best gifts, but who would throw them all away and come to grief somehow. He was a great favorite of his chef, he was the darling of a very exclusive society; nobody in Baden would have shared my presentiment, I dare say, who saw him talking and laughing in the Conversation, exchanging mots with wits, or looking into his fiancée's eyes as he whirled her round in a waltz, though they might if they had noticed him when he was backing the color, his eyes dark, his lips white with feverish excitement, spurred to greater recklessness if he lost, tempted to further risk if he won, never

tired of the delicious excitement, forgetting one love in another for the beckoning Circe that lured him in that syren refrain, "Faites votre jeu, messieurs!" Luck began to run against him; he lost more at the Baden tables than even a rich man could well have afforded, and a rich man he was not.

"He had a fine fortune ten years ago," said a man I knew, Powell of the Carbineers, one day in the Kursaal.

"Who had?" said I. "Chesterfield?"

"Yes; but he's made ducks and drakes of it. His uncle left him a good lot of tin, but I don't fancy there's much of it now. You know he's such a shocking fellow for play; games away no end. It is deucedly tempting, but there's a medium in all things."

There was a medium for him—a cool, unimpressible, philosophic sort of fellow; but there was none for Chesterfield. People can't judge one another, how should they? What sympathy, I wonder, could Zeno's ice-cold veins have for the fire that flowed in Alcibiades'? How, possibly, could Epicurus, with rose wreaths on his hair, and a blue-eyed slave handing him his opimian, understand how Diogenes, in his most bearish moments, could take pleasure in a tub and cabbage-leaves, in dirt, and a dark lantern? How could Hannah More, I should like to know, guess the most remotely at the organisation of Heloïse? and how could Pitt, the ascetic, measure the warm passions of Sheridan or Fox? We see but in a glass darkly, and there only our own reflection, which we look at so long, and so lovingly, that any other that differs from it we count as deformity or abortion. Powell couldn't understand Chesterfield, seeing that they were as dissimilar as iced hock and burnt curaçao; but I did, and I saw that the passion for play, which had made ducks and drakes of his fortune, was gnawing in

him still, and drawing him resistlessly into its charmed circle; that he longed with all his heart to break the fascination, but that it held him tight, and exercised over him a stronger spell than any that even Eva Boville could cast upon him. She had a dangerous rival; with her he would still hanker wistfully for the excitement of the green tables; absorbed in Trente-et-Un, he gave no thought to his other love. And yet—though you won't allow it my dear madame, I dare say—he *did* love her as fondly, too, as any man could.

"What a fool I was ever to come into this accursed place!" I heard him mutter to himself one morning, after the run of luck had been dead against him. "If I hadn't come where gaming was I might have kept to my resolve."

"Why did you, then?"

He turned quickly; he didn't know I was near him.

"The Bovilles were coming—Eva bade me meet her here; could I tell her I was such a coward that I dare not venture within reach of temptation?"

"Unpleasant, sans doute; but mightn't there be equal cowardice (*passez-moi le mot*) in *not* telling her?"

His face flushed.

"Maybe; it would be right that she should know all my weaknesses and follies; perhaps I deceive her in concealing them, but I cannot destroy her ideal of me—I cannot be the one to tell her how weak a fool is the man she loves."

"And it's as difficult to forswear the green tables?"

"Yes!" he said with a bitter intonation, that spoke more than fifty asseverations; and then he laughed, his gay, musical laugh. "Plato says the gods created us to be their playthings; if so, ninepins and kites may surely be allowed to be unstable."

“But you’ve lost no end, haven’t you?”

“Twenty thousand francs this morning, but the run of luck *must* change. Cassagnac won his stakes and his bets one after another last night, why may not I to-morrow?”

Madame Clos de Vougeot and I were flirting away that night: we suited one another to a T. She was a charming little woman. “Artificial!” cried Ill-nature. My dear madam, we know *you* are all reality from your pearls to your smiles, your luxuriant braids to your polite, little speeches, but if we only taste Johannesburg pur, I’m afraid we shall have to send away most of the bottles. Rather let us drink and be thankful, and not spoil bouquet and flavor by impertinent questions!

“Comme Cyril a l’air égaré!” cried she, as Chesterfield passed us. “Il a perdu encore une fois peut-être; il joue toujours gros jeu. C’est dommage; mais—mon Dieu, comme c’est séduisant la roulette!”

“Oh, Cyril, they tell me M. Toralhier lost his last florin at Trente-et-Un yesterday,” said Eva Boville to him in her innocence, when they were alone. “He was a rich man when he came to Baden. What a strange infatuation it is to risk beggary on the color of a card, the turn of an ivory ball, to spend a lifetime waiting on the caprices of Chance, to lose wealth, time, peace, sometimes life itself, following the fickle changes of accident! It is an insanity, surely! I watched you to-day at the table, and I wished you would not go there. It is foolish of me, I dare say, but you are so altered when you play; your lips are white, your eyes feverish, your face so worn and haggard, I wonder you find pleasure in it.”

He held her closer to him, kissing her fondly and passionately with lips that trembled upon hers.

“You would wonder at much that is in *my* heart; better for your own peace that you should never know it.

I love you dearly, you know, though I am little worthy you. But if any can save me it is you alone. I promise you, on my word of honor, I will not stake another farthing at those accursed tables."

For many days the ball clicked against the points, and the croupiers raked in the florins and francs, the old punters pricked their printed tickets, and the pretty decoy ducks with fictitious titles played with the bank's own gold, the sealed rolls of Naps fell softly on the green cloth, and "*Rien ne va plus!*"—"Trente-Deux—Rouge—Pair et passe!" echoed through the hall, but the croupiers and spies looked vainly for Chesterfield.

III.

HOW CIRCE CONQUERED.

ONE night we were gathered in the Kursaal as usual, the gas in the chandeliers burning brightly down on the tables, the dashing women glittering with jewels and inimitable toilettes, the men with cordons in their button-holes, the pensioners of the bank playing and chatting pleasantly with tempting pigeons, the visitors the pick of Europe, princes and nobles, statesmen and aristocrats, punting away, but looking smiling, impassive, indifferent—in seeming, at least. All was calm and hushed; no despair, or oaths, or anything so ill-bred as innocent *vielles filles* fancy when they throw up their eyes in horror at the whispers of a gaming-table; and in the silence there was only the click of the ball and the monotonous refrain of the croupiers and the whisper of the pretty women.

I had just put three Naps à cheval on three chances of the roulette, when I saw Chesterfield standing by me. Others might look impassive, he didn't; he was pale, and his lips worked, and his eyes had a wild, longing look in them, like a dog's thirsting for water. He pushed his way to the roulette-table, and staked upon the red. Absorbed in my own game, I did not heed him till, having given the bank its gain in zeros to the amount of twenty Naps' loss on my side, I retired from the game with a prudence I hope you will vote highly commendable, and then I noticed Chesterfield. He was a strange contrast to the laughing, impassive, and controlled people round him; the veins were swelled out on his forehead, his lips parched and drawn tight across his teeth, his eyes glittered unnaturally, as if with delirium or madness, and his hand trembled as he put down his stakes. His system was to double always when he lost: that system he had pursued now. Black had appeared eleven times, the color surely *must* chance! He waited, his breath coming short and thick in the agonised impatience of his suspense. A twelfth time, black!—a thirteenth, black! He lost! The croupier raked away the seven thousand florins to which his stakes had swelled. Without a word, without looking to the right or left, his face more the hue of a dead than a living man's, he pushed his way out of the hall.

“Voilà votre pauvre diable qui va quitter l'enfer pour chercher un asile moins chaud dans le purgatoire!” said Clos de Vougeot, with a laugh.

It was only a heartless jest, but somehow it chilled my blood as if it had been a prophecy, and I followed him out of the Kursaal. I lost him in the dim shadows of the night, greyer and more confusing still after the glare of the gilded halls I had just left, for there was but

little light from a new moon, and the stormy clouds drifting over the sky hid the stars from sight ; but I guessed he would have gone on to his hotel after leaving the roulette-table so abruptly, and impelled by a sudden impulse I went there too—why, I could hardly tell you. Monsieur had just entered, the porter told me, and I ran up the staircase to Chesterfield's rooms. The door was shut but not locked. I opened it without knocking. Again, I could not tell you why, a horrible, feverish, unreasoning anxiety possessed me to be *in time*—for what I hardly paused to realise or define. He stood with his back to me, and I saw the glitter of a pistol-barrel as he raised his hand upwards to his head. Clos de Vougeot's devilish jest was a prophetic one. With a spring as though he were my murderer, and it were my life that hung in the balance, I crossed the room, and struck his arm with a jerk that discharged the pistol in the air, and sent the bullet hissing through the heavy curtains that shrouded the window.

“Chesterfield, good Heaven ! what are you about?”

He turned on me fiercely, his eyes glittering like a madman, wrenching his arm from my grasp, he who was generally as gentle as a woman.

“Who told you to come here ? Get out, and let me be.

“I will *not* let you be till you are sane.”

“Sane ? I am sane enough,” he cried, with a laugh that rang horridly clear in the silent night. “Would I *were* mad. Let me alone. You have balked me once but there is another chance left.”

He wrenched his arm again from me, and leaned over the table to reach the other pistol, but before he could lay his hand on it, I flung it away through the second window, which by accident was open, out into the garden below.

“You *are* mad, for the time being, and I shall treat you as though you were, till you listen to reason. Calm yourself, for Heaven’s sake, for the sake of your manhood, your courage, your honor, for the sake of the woman you say you love. Your life is not your own to throw away like this.”

The best spell I could have used was her name. The feverish glare faded from his eyes, his lips quivered painfully, and his head sank upon his arms.

“My God! do not speak to me of her.”

“And why? Is she not your promised wife? Has she no influence on your fate, no claim to your remembrance?”

He signed me to silence.

“Every title, every claim. I have loved her dearly, but I have loved play better. Barely a week ago I promised her as solemnly as a man could never to go to the roulette again. She did not know the extent of my losses, nor did I tell her them, but I gave her my word of honor, and I have broken it! I resisted the temptation, Heaven knows with what effect; no drunkard struggling against his curse ever struggled more firmly than I against mine. But last night Cassagnac told me of his run of luck at Homburg. Debts of honor pressed on me. Why, I thought, might not I make a similar coup and retrieve all I had lost? Fool that I was, I entered the Kursaal, resolved to stake *but once*. I heard the click of the ball, the voices of the croupiers, the soft fall of the gold. I forgot honor, wisdom, prudence, everything; the old delirium came upon me too strong for me to have any strength against it. I had no power to pause till I was ruined, till I had lost all! Great Heaven, what a madman I have been! Digraced in my own eyes, what shall I be in hers?”

“You will not tell her, then?”

“Tell her! do you think I could tell her? It would be good news for her, truly, that she is loved so little that a game of Trente-et-Un is dearer, has so little influence that her lover could forget her, and fling away all, even honor, for her rival—Play? I, who could not give her a moment’s pain, how should I deal the death-blow to her trust and faith? I could no more tell her that I broke my word than I could shoot a spaniel as it licked my hand. You asked me once yourself in jest how she would like a ruined gambler for a husband.”

His voice was choked with sobs he vainly tried to conceal. Trente-et-Un has had many victims, but I doubt if ever one who lost more to it than he. I tried to reason with him and to calm him as best I could. I put before him how willingly women who love us forgive—Heaven help them!—any sins and weaknesses with which we wrong them. I urged him strongly to tell her and her father frankly all, so that they might no longer urge him to stay on this hotbed of his pet temptation. I pressed him to leave Baden at once; from such a Circe there is no safety save in flight; but I could not persuade him into an avowal of his losses.

“No, no,” he said, persistently, “I could not tell her—I could not. You do not know what it is to be loved by a woman, noble, pure, guileless herself, and to have deceived and wronged her trust in you. That I am beggared for the time they must learn, if I cannot in any way retrieve what I have flung away. How I can I do not see as yet, but some way I will find, so that I need never wring her heart by telling her I betrayed my word.”

“You are wrong, to my mind,” said I. “A sin confessed is half atoned, and more than half, and were I you

I should not be afraid of trusting Eva Boville's mercy. I should fear infinitely more living with her day after day with a wrong untold, and a secret, like Luther's devil, everlastingly between us. Besides, if you tell her, you can leave Baden at once; she will not urge you to stay. And if you stay, another twenty-four hours may find you again——"

"No, no!" he said, passionately, "I swear I will never go near those accursed tables again. Indeed, had I the will, I have not the power; I have lost all available money there already. Great Heaven! what a fool, a madman, I have been, I, who had so bright a future before me—wealth, peace, honor, self-respect, *all* squandered! Most suicides throw away a darkened life, I have murdered the fairest and brightest future man ever had to smile on him!"

I did not leave him till he was so much calmed that I feared no repetition of that night's attempted drama. I should not have left him then, but a message had called me on important business to Ooes, to meet a brother of mine who was passing through there from Berlin, and I left the Bad by an early train. I would gladly have stayed if I could. Chesterfield interested me powerfully; he saddened me, too; there seemed something so contradictory and bizarre in a fate that appeared to compel a man highly-gifted, fortune-favored, sweet-tempered, talented, and liked by all, to work out his own ruin so devoutly, and murder his brightest prospects with such reckless persistence. I have often regretted, bitterly regretted, that I left him. Ah, mon ami, we should have few regrets if we could see to-day what to-morrow will bring forth, prepare for the hurricane, and seek shelter before the storm!

It was forty-eight hours after that when I drove back

to Baden; the days were sultry, and I chose a night-drive rather than the train. The silvery beams of the dawn were streaking the pearly grey of the sky far away among the hills, the mosses at the roots of the birches and pines were glistening with the morning dews, the birds were waking up with a gleeful carol to greet the sunrise; it was a strange contrast from the open country to the town, stranger still, too, opposite the Kursaal, where the gas chandeliers were burning, and the women laughed with the diamonds on their dresses and the rouge on their cheeks, where the carriages with their liveried footmen and emblazoned panels waited outside the doors, while the roulette turned and the gold fell smoothly on the green cloth, and the men and women flirted and intrigued, and gamed away their stakes, within. As I drove past the Kursaal I saw a crowd gathered a few yards from it—a crowd that swelled and grew as one by one the people left the gaming-tables and came out into the grey air of the coming dawn, some going to their carriages, some lounging carelessly away, others joining the little group.

Why did the sight of that crowd chill me as though they were gathered to take me up for theft or murder? Heaven knows! Without stopping to reason, I threw the reins to the groom, sprang down, and pushed my way through the knot of people.

In the midst of them lay the dead body of a man, his face white and calm, save where the brow was knit as if with pain, his lips blue and slightly parted, his right hand clenched upon a pistol-butt, and on his left temple, from which they had pushed the silky golden hair, a dark round orifice, through which the ball had entered to the brain. And through the crowd ran a whisper 'Lost at roulette—shot himself!'

"Chesterfield! good Heaven! why, I lent him a hun-

dred Naps only an hour ago," said Cassagnac, lounging up.

"Ah ! il est allé au purgatoire, comme je vous l'avais prédit," laughed Clos de Vougeot, passing to his carriage.

For the devilish jest I could have knocked him down. but a mist came before my eyes, I turned sick and faint, knelt down by the dead body, and I could have wept like a woman, though I had seen dead and dying men enough before then ! I guessed well enough how it was, his old delirium had come upon him ; he had borrowed hoping to retrieve his shattered fortunes, hoping to cover his ruin before the woman he loved could learn it ; he had lost again, and honor, peace, all gone, he in despair had fled in a madman's haste and agony from the life which now was tainted with dishonor. I guessed the story easily, but the white cold lips could never move again to tell it : there he lay, in the soft silvery dawn—DEAD, while the green woodlands stirred with awakening life, and the birds sang under the forest leaves, and the river glanced in the morning light, and the world roused, laughing for another summer day, and the woman who loved him slept, dreaming golden, innocent dreams of a future that never would come.

Last August I stood in the Kursaal at Baden, pondering again on that strange passion for Play which none of us can resist while the spell is upon us—that is witching as woman, dangerous as drink, insatiable as death—that has claimed more victims than the noblest cause for which men ever fought and fell, and won more sacrifices than the fairest idol. The roulette was turning in its metal disk, the gold was lying on the green tables, the jewelled women were laughing and playing in the halls where he had worked out his doom. I thought of him

bitterly, sadly, regretfully; but in the whirl of ever-changing life, a woman old while yet young, widowed before she was a wife, with eyes that never smile and lips that never laugh, and cheeks on which dangerous hectic burns and fades, and I who now write his story—a story sad but common enough—are the only ones who remember the beauty, the talent, the happiness, the peace, the honor that he, poor fellow! so madly poured out on the altars of TRENTÉ-ET-UN.

THE DONKEYSHIRE MILITIA.

THE DONKEYSHIRE MILITIA.

I.

LENNOX DUNBAR.

VERY glorious we were to sight in our scarlet coats and our yellow facings, our pipe-clayed belts and our struggling moustaches, our bran-new swords and our beautiful Albert hats, with the delightful little peak behind to conduct the rain into our necks, and the funny little white knob a-top, like a floured tennis-ball or a guelder-rose.

Very glorious we were, the East Donkeyshire Militia (Light Infantry;) and when we came down the street in full marching order, with our band in front of us clad picturesquely in white, as if they'd come out *en chemise* by mistake, and our bugleman playing one tune, and our fogleman another, and our drum performing a chorus peculiar to itself, I assure you *we* didn't think the Blues or the Coldstreams, or Cardigan's Eleventh would have been half so swell.

The East Donkeyshire was embodied in '54, when Britannia took all her hounds to draw the Crimean cover and left the old dogs and pups at home to guard the ken-

nel, and bark at poachers if they couldn't bite them. And in the town of Snobleton, the embodiment of the East Donkeyshire was held by ladies as a decided blessing, and by their spiritual pastors and masters as an especial curse. For, in Snobleton, males between twenty and fifty were a rarity, and some eighteen eligible scarlet coats (even though those coats were militia,) fit to be hunted down and married out of hand, were, as ladies are constituted, a great boon to the young Venuses of East Donkeyshire. I assure you it was the most flattering thing in the world, the first day we were billeted there, to see the lots of pretty little faces that came to the windows, and the pretty little figures that clad themselves in their most voluminous crinolines, and put on their best-fitting gloves, and their daintiest boots, and patrolled with an innocent, unconscious air before the Marquis's Arms, where our mess was established.

I can't tell you, I'm sure, how I came to join the Donkeyshire; for though, to the best of my belief, I shall never see a brief in my life, I belong to Middle Temple, and had about as much business in the militia as a sailor has at a meet. But I had nothing to do just then; my old chum, Dunbar, was a captain in it, for a lark, as he said; and so I, for a lark too, bought a beautiful Albert hat, and thought, as I surveyed myself in it, that if the Trojan helmet anyway resembled it, Hector's small boy showed good taste in being afraid of it.

The Donkeyshire was a sort of zoological gardens, so varied were the specimens of the *genus homo* it offered for exhibition. First, of course, was the colonel, Sir Cadwallader de Vaux, who knew as much about manœuvring a battalion as I do about crochet or cooking. Then there was the lieutenant-colonel, Mounteagle ("Mount Etna" we called him, he was so deucedly peppery,) a short,

stout, choleric little fellow, but nevertheless a very fair soldier. Spicer, the major, who, having been an officer of Sepoy cavalry, was of course eminently fitted to drill militia infantry. Popleton, romantic, musical, and spoony, son of the Donkeyshire banker. Stickleback, who squinted, and was lamentably ugly, yet tried hard to be a fast man, but couldn't. Muskett, our adjutant, who limped, we said from sciatica, he from a ball at Jellalabad. Eagle, whose governor we suspected of trade, and who, like a snob as he was, dressed loud, and was great in studs, watch-chains, and rings. And then last, but not least in the Donkeyshire, since we were the sole leaven of gentlemanism, your humble servant, Vansittart; Carlton de Vaux, whom everybody called Charlie, who had joined "only," Sir Cadwallader impressed on us, "for example;" and my old chum, Lennox Dunbar, who had first been a middy, then spent a term or two at college, then went on the stage half a year, then into the Hussars till he fought a duel and got a gentle hint to sell out, then led a Bohemian's life on the Continent, and lastly turned *littérateur*, and wrote slashing articles in the periodicals. Now, having eight hundred a year left him by an old aunt, he was a captain in the Donkeyshire, and the finest fellow that ever stood six feet in his stockings. 'Pon my word it was the best fun in life to see how all the girls looked at Dunbar when he swung with his cavalry step through the streets. Why, even the *vieilles filles* going district visiting with strong copies of *The Pulpit*, Mr. Ryle's tracts, or Mr. Molyneux's sermons, neatly bound in brown paper, were obliged to give furtive glances at his soldierly figure, handsome face, and silky whiskers and moustaches—ay, and sighed, too, as they gazed, though they wouldn't have confessed it; no, not if put to the rack.

"Deuce take it, this place seems as dull as a graveyard," said he, the first night at mess. "My ten talents of attraction are buried in a napkin. Why did you ask me to join, colonel? Van here will hang himself if he hasn't twenty pretty women to make love to."

"That's one word for me and two for yourself, Dunbar," said I. "I bet you a pony before a month's out you'll be buried in a shower of pretty pink notes."

"Some of the girls here ain't bad-looking," yawned Stickleback; "but the place is certainly awfully slow."

"By Jove! there's your sister, Pop; you must introduce us all. I danced with her a month ago at the Charity Ball, and I noticed she'd a very pretty foot," cried Charlie de Vaux; "and then there are those three women—what the deuce is their name?—who dress alike, and walk up and down High-street twenty times in a morning."

"The Breloques, you mean? Oh, they're nobodies!" drawled Eagle. "They're dangerous. They try and hook every man they meet. Adela has been engaged six times to my knowledge; and I've a great idea their braids are false."

"Like your figure," murmured Dunbar. "Are there no widows? I like widows. They're easy game, and don't compromise one."

"All's easy game in Donkeyshire," answered De Vaux. "By George! we're so rare, that some ladies thought of putting me under a glass case as the only good-looking man."

"And label you, 'Visitors are requested to look, but not to fall in love, as the specimen can't stand it'—eh?" laughed Dunbar. "Well, you and I have got a nice little covey of partridges where we hang out, Van."

"Yes. Confound you. You took care of that, Dun-

bar," said old "Mount Etna," bursting with laughter and pale ale. "You got the best billet there was, as far as the beaux yeux went."

"Well, colonel," said Dunbar, "all wise men have their weaknesses. Richelieu's was cats, Byron's swimming, Peter the Great's was drawing teeth, and mine is—women. Let's toast them!"

"I wish my sister heard you classing women among weaknesses. What fun it would be to hear her fire up. What beastly sherry this is!" said De Vaux.

"And the claret's a swindle. I'll speak about it if the adjutant won't. Have you a sister? What's she like?"

"How should I know. Come and see," responded Charlie. "She pulled me up in a line from Horace the other day, little puss! which I wanted to impose on the governor."

Dunbar looked disgusted. "Oh! Blue?"

"Lor! bless you, no, not a bit of it. She sings all day and waltzes all night, but she knows no end for all that."

"Knows Latin! I shall hate her," thought Dunbar. "I say, colonel, which is it to be—loo, whist, or vingt et un?"

It was a pouring night. Luckless Popleton (nicknamed Ginger-pop, from the hue of his numerous curls) was on guard, and went shivering round under a dainty umbrella to the different billets and down to the guard-house, and we telling him to put his feet into hot water and be sure and have some gruel when he came back, sat down to the loo-table.

Dunbar and I lodged over a pastrycook's, the Ude of Donkeyshire, and the "Covey" alluded to were the pastrycook's two daughters, Fanny and Sophy. Very handsome girls they were, and they knew it too. They were fine, dashing, well-dressed brunettes, and from the

grammar-boys, who came to sigh their souls out over "tuck," to old Spicer, who, stoic though he was, liked to come and have his mulligatawny there, the two Miss Toffys were the admiration of Snobleton. "Notre magasin," as Dunbar called it, was a general attraction, and the amount of ices, cherry-brandy, and mock-turtle old Toffy sold, thanks to his daughters' black eyes, must have swelled his receipts enormously.

The militia were godsend to the Covey, and they smiled impartially on us all, for they were prudent young ladies, and fished at the same time with minnows and gudgeons, worms and flies, dead and live bait; so that if the big fish wouldn't nibble, the little ones might. Dunbar was soon in favor with both. In fact, I don't think the woman ever lived with whom, if he chose, Dunbar wasn't in favor. "My dear fellow," he used to say, "I'm a modern Pygmalion; the very statues would fall in love with me if I asked 'em. It's only a little knack that's wanted with women." The "little knack" he possessed, that was very certain, and a greater flirt never whispered pretty things in a *deux temps*. But though he dressed as well as D'Orsay, was as handsome as the Apollo—shot, swam, rode, and played billiards better than any man I know—sang, and drew caricatures like Garcia and Cruikshank—and, withal, wrote the most pungent brochures and sparkling tales under the *nom de plume* of "Latakia"—yet I give you my word he hadn't a spark of vanity in his composition. Indeed, he was fond of calling himself the black sheep of his family, and saying his terrier had done as much good in its generation as he had during the thirty-two years he had walked to and fro upon the earth. He and De Vaux were the "*belles*" of the Donkeyshire. Charlie was a pretty boy of nineteen or so, with golden curls, and black eyes as soft as a girl's, and when

we marched to the cricket-field, and the Snobleton gamins shrieked forth, "The melishec's a comin'!" many were the faces that came to the window (to talk to the canary, of course,) and many the round hats we encountered (by accident, on purpose,) for the sake of the handsome captain and en sign, whom *even* the Albert hat couldn't wholly disfigure. The cricket-field was our parade-ground. There did the Awkward Squad suffer its pain and torture—there did old Mount Etna roar fruitlessly, "To the right face!" the Donkeyshire invariably turning thereupon to the left face—there did we, if ordered to form into section, form into line as sure as a gun, and when Muskett screamed, "Halt!" did we set off double-quick—there did Hodges stamp on Bill Stubbs's toe, and Jack fire his ramrod into Brother Ambrose's eye, and Private A. make ready while Private B. was firing, and Sergeant C. call out, "Left, right!" while Sergeant D. marched right, left, and my company halted stock-still, while Dunbar's marched double-quick, and Eagle's formed into line, and Popleton's into square, and we finally got all muddled together in inextricable confusion, and finished the day's manœuvres with a grand scene of the gallant Donkeyshire entirely routed and demoralised by itself.

But the Snobletonians thought us very grand, so it didn't matter, and when we went full figg to church, with our band performing the three different tunes at once, and we sat in the mayor's pew, with our men in front of us, and old Mount Etna dozed and woke himself with a jerk in the wrong places, and Spicer sat bolt upright, eying the lectern eagle fiercely, and Ginger-pop looked shyly into the Breloques's pew, and Stickleback stuck his glass in the eye that squinted, and Dunbar caricatured the curate on the fly-leaf of his Church Ser-

vice, the young ladies glanced up at us when they appeared to be reading the lessons, and thought the Donkeyshire Militia was the finest corps ever embodied.

II.

BEATRICE DE VAUX.

For the next month we set Snobleton going as that prudish-proud and poverty-stricken borough had never gone before. Ginger-pop's governor's house was always free to us, and as Georgie Popleton was a good-looking girl, though confoundedly affected, we accepted the banker's *carte blanche*, and the Breloques's too. Adela, Augusta, and Lavinia, three fine women, with, somebody said, 10,000*l.* each—desperate flirts, and very good waltzers—made their mother's house very agreeable, especially to the young birds who didn't doubt the complexions, quiz the style, and know that the smiles had been given to twenty others before 'em. Dunbar woke up the governors of the subscription-rooms, had oyster suppers and whist established there, and introduced pool. He made a row about the mess wines, too, and forced the Marquis's Arms to give us really good dinners. He satirised the Donkeyshire, lampooned Stickleback's sporting efforts, Eagle's airs, and Pop's weaknesses, and drew caricatures of M'Dougall, our surgeon, who went clanking about in his sword at all hours, he was so proud of it; of Ginger-pop warbling, "Will you love me then as now?" under Adela's window in the dead of night; of Pop, again, as he appeared the 1st of September, when,

being unused to powder, his gun kicked, and he fell flat on his back, to the admiration of all beholders; of Spicer eating ragoûts, and Charlie ices in "notre magasin," with the Covey smiling generously on both: in short, of all the scenes and ways—and they were not rare—in which the Donkeyshire made fools of themselves.

"Where's Charlie? Does anybody know?" said Dunbar, one Monday evening, when we were playing loo in his rooms.

"I do," answered Stickleback. "He's down below, making love to Miss Fanny. He came in with us, but the young lady waylaid him."

"Master Charlie's good taste. I thought all the tin he laid out on cherry-tipple, vermicelli, and soda-water, wasn't for nothing," said Dunbar, who'd taken a liking to the young fellow, as the boy had equally to him. "I say, I saw his twin-sister to-day. Do any of you happen to know her?"

"What! Beatrice? No; she's only just home from Paris," said Eagle, whom Sir Cadwallader would no more have introduced to his daughter than he'd have introduced a costermonger. "What's she like? Come-tell us, Dunbar."

"She's very pretty," said Lennox, critically; "that I'll admit: chestnut hair, long dark eyes to match, soft skin, nice figure, and a very little hand and pretty foot, and stands up clean. She looks clever, decidedly so, and—it's a pity she knows Latin! What are trumps? Thank you. I say, Pop, how far is it gone? Has she named the day? We'll come in full figg, band and all."

Popleton blushed, and lost half a guinea in his confusion.

"What an ungrateful fellow you are not to tell your bosom friends," cried Dunbar. "Well, you won't deny,

Pop, I hope, that you were singing, 'She sleeps, my lady sleeps!' at two o'clock last night, and that Adela opened her window like an angel as she is, and dropped a three-cornered note at your feet—will you, eh?"

"I—I—really never knew that you saw me," murmured Ginger-pop.

Dunbar shouted with laughter at his random shot having hit home.

"Of course you didn't. I defy any man to stare devoutly at a third-story window and look up the street at the same time. I'll take 'Miss,' Van. Hallo, Charlie! here you are at last. Wasn't Fanny kind to-night?"

The boy laughed. "What are you playing for, Dunbar?"

"As usual—maximum, ten. Don't make yourself ill with ices, Charlie; you had a dozen to-day, I think. The Covey are all very well, but they're not worth a bilious fever; besides, they like old Spicer's yellow-boys better than your yellow curls, mon garçon. I say, I saw your sister to-day, with the governor."

"Pussy! did you? Well, what do you think of her?"

"That she might be charming if she didn't know Latin. Her eyes are like Caepigue's description of Du Barry's."

"What, the Revalenta Arabica man?" asked Popleton, staring.

"Not exactly, most innocent Ginger," laughed Dunbar. "Take another weed, Van, they're real Manillas; my brother Jack brought 'em over. By Jove! I wonder if he's spending to-night in the trenches."

"I say, Dunbar," said Charlie—

"What, am I loosed? By George!"

"I say, didn't you write 'Charlie Cheroots; or, the Fusiliers,' that's coming out in the *Pot-Pourri*?"

Dunbar nodded.

"And that thing, too, on 'Popular Preachers?'"

"Yes. Didn't you see 'em signed 'Latakia?'"

"Well, Beatrice said the other day, after reading 'em, that they were the best things she'd ever seen, and if she were to know the author she was quite certain she should fall in love with him."

"She's quite welcome; I don't mind," said Dunbar, with an amiably submissive air. "I'll have 'Miss' again, it's the only fun there is in loo. Don't tell her I wrote 'em, Charlie. Let her find it out."

"But if she don't love you?"

"Ca m'est bien egal," said Dunbar, caressing his moustaches. "It's rather a bore to be loved, you know; for, if you don't love in return, it's no fun; and if you do, you're in an everlasting fever and work. I've been in love ever since I can remember. My first attachment was a little girl with blue eyes and peony cheeks; not an exalted object, for she was our lodge-keeper's daughter, but I know I took her hardbake devoutly, and adored her, until my cousin Valencia came. But she was twenty, and I worshipped her at a distance—I wa eleven, I believe; but I know, when Jack Montresor married her, I could have slain him without shrive. Nous avons change tout cela: now I neither slay myself nor my rivals—even your sister, Charlie, wouldn't be worth the exertion."

"I'll tell her what you say. By Jove, won't she cut up rough! Pussy's great ideas of what's due to her sex!"

"Do; it will keep her from falling in love with the author of 'Charlie Cheroots,' who, you may add, would see himself hanged before he married a girl who knew Latin."

"Or before he married at all, eh?"

"I don't know," said Dunbar, meditatively. "Per

haps I may, some fine day, as a *dernier ressort*. I've used up everything else. I may, before I go to glory, try matrimony as a change; not that I think it would agree with me, but just as they give boys sulphur and treacle, as a wholesome disagreeable."

We played till it struck three and then refreshed ourselves with "natives," lobster-salad, maccaroni, gelatine de dindon, and all the provocations to gourmandise the Toffy talent could offer us. And over the Burton ale and cognac and hollands, the fun grew fast, and Charlie's laughter uproarious. Dunbar told us *bal d'Opera* and *Chaumière* stories, and jests of the Rag and the coulisses. Stickleback, under the gentle influences of whisky, told long tales of steeple-chases, and the ring and the yard, to which nobody listened. Eagle waxed confidential, and related an undying passion for a fair countess he had met at a race-ball, which was very amusing to me, as I knew the lady in question, and knew, too, that she'd as soon have accepted attentions from a groom as from the son of a gin-merchant. And Popleton—poor Popleton!—with tears in his eyes, spoke pathetically of his devotion to Adela Breloques; showed us a note of hers beginning "Beloved Augustus," and signed "Ever thine;" and, finally commenced singing "Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean," till Dunbar stopped him at the outset by telling him it was shockingly stupid of him if he didn't; tears were made of water, albumen, and salts, and always meant, with women, that they'd come to their last round of ammunition, and that you'd better kiss 'em away as fast as possible.

Then we went home to our different billets as the milk-carts began to go about the streets, and the servant-girls to clean their steps; and I thought, as Master Charlie left the door of "*notre magasin*" chanting "He's a jolly

good fellow," that though Sir Cadwallader, in his innocence, wished him to join "for example," the "example" was a dubious benefit to the Donkeyshire.

"But I like that young fellow," said Dunbar that night, or rather morning. "He's good-hearted and plucky, and never forgets he's a gentleman. He's getting very soft about Miss Fanny; I'll take care he don't do what a pretty milliner of Petty Cury once trapped me into when I was at Trinity—that greatest of *bêtises*, a promise of marriage. Fanny's wide awake, and very handsome."

The next day we went over to Springley, Sir Cadwallader's place. We all belonged to the Donkeyshire Archery Club, and as the last meeting was held at Springley, we received an invitation from the colonel to stay and dine there. Dunbar and I had been there several times, but MM. Eagle, Stickleback, Pop, and Co. had not attained to the great dignity. Looking a cross between an English Belle and a Spanish huntress, I saw Beatrice De Vaux for the first time in my life. She was, I may as well say is, exquisitely pretty; and her long eyes, soft and dark like Charlie's, shot destruction into the Donkeyshire that day from under the coquettish grey hat of the archery dress.

She has a good dash of her old governor's pride, but mixed with so much grace, softness, and girlish vivacity, that it's very bewitching. She bowed a little carelessly to the rest of the gallant Donkeyshire, who were not, certainly, attractive in appearance to a young lady fresh from her first season, but smiled as she recognised Dunbar, who looked, it is true, among the males of Donkeyshire, something as Apollo might look among the Yahoos. He won the claret-jug, she the *négligé*, the two first prizes, which threw them together the rest of the day. Dun-

bar seemed to relish his fate extremely, and never to remember Beatrice De Vaux knew—Latin!

Brilliant and witty as he was, he had to put out all his paces with her; she was so clever that it roused him into exerting his intellectual strength, and making her feel that there was still more in him than he allowed to appear. He did not take her in to dinner, but he sat on her left hand, and the ringing fire of their repartees made even Sir Cadwallader relax into a laugh.

“By Jove!” whispered Charlie to me, “Dunbar and Pussy seem to get on, don’t they? If she knew how he talked about her last night, wouldn’t she give him a licking!”

When we went into the drawing-room she was sitting in a low chair near the piano, looking divine, as Pop would have phrased it, her dress for all the world like a pile of white cloud; Hunt and Roskell’s newest bracelets on her white arms, Paris flowers in her wavy chestnut hair, and her whole style and toilette unmistakably thorough-bred. Dunbar lounged up to her, leant his arm on the piano, and resumed their dinner conversation.

She had in her hand the *Pot-Pourri*, the monthly in which “Charlie Cheroots” was coming out, with sundry other slashing articles by Latakia, political or satirical.

“Isn’t he clever, this Latakia, Captain Dunbar!” began Beatrice. “I think all he writes is delightful. I wish I knew his real name. Can’t you tell it me?”

“I grieve to refuse you, but I mustn’t, indeed, for he wishes to keep his incognito,” answered the hypocritical Latakia.

“Do you know him, then?”

“Yes. I know as much of him as most people do.”

“Oh! how tiresome you are. Can’t you tell me his

name?" cried the young lady. "I should so love to know him; he is so amusing. Isn't he very nice?"

Dunbar stroked his moustaches, and looked dissent "N—no. I don't think so. He has a great many faults, and has done many naughty things in his life. He is very fond of satirising other people, and might look at home with advantage. Like Pendennis, he's his own greatest enemy and best friend. He has talents, perhaps; but he fritters them away."

"Fritters them away, when he writes such things as the May article on the Crimean question!" cried Beatrice, looking charmingly indignant. "Well! you are not very complimentary to your friend; one would think you were jealous of him. Poor Latakia! it is well he cannot hear you."

"You are severe, Miss De Vaux," said Dunbar, with an injured expression. "I was only saying the truth. I like Latakia; nobody better. But he has a good many faults, and I can't be blind to them."

"Well! I am sorry," said Beatrice, arching her pretty pencilled eyebrows. "I like his writing; he is witty, without straining at wit; racy, without ever being coarse; he draws society like a man of the world, and depicts character as only one can who has a deep insight into human nature; and bitterly as he lashes social follies or frauds, you can see under all his satire a true warm sympathy with what is noble in life, and an under vein of sadness which tells you that though he laughs, scoffs, and jests, he has not lived without tasting sorrow."

I don't doubt it was very pleasant to Dunbar to hear himself so energetically defended by such a champion as Beatrice, with her dark eyes beaming, her haughty little head raised, and her delicate cheeks flushed; but

he didn't let himself seem so. He merely bowed his head.

"Latakia will be very flattered when I tell him how happy he is in your good opinion."

Beatrice looked a little annoyed at his quizzical smile.

"Oh!" she said, carelessly, "I admire talent wherever I meet with it. I like to see any man boldly stemming the current of public opinion, and stating frankly his own thoughts, even where they are most at issue with the renewed prejudices of society; and you, even, must admit, that your friend does this."

"Yes; certainly," said Dunbar. "I only don't fancy him as clever as he'd made himself out. But are you not terribly anxious, Miss De Vaux, to know whether Charlie Cheroots marries Lucille or Lady Adeliza? Shall I write and ask Latakia?"

Beatrice gave him a pretty half-annoyed, half-amused glance, put her head up and looked disdainful, and, turning to the piano, sang the "*Fleur de l'Ame*" with a thrilling, *passionnée*, pathetic voice, that went near to making poor Popleton weep. Dunbar asked her to play "*Amour et Fanatisme*" for him; and addressed the "*Chrétienne aux longs yeux bleus*" with such artistic style that Beatrice began to forgive him, and they sang Italian bravuras till the rest of the Donkeyshire grew mad with envy.

When he and I, with Eagle and Popleton, drove back to Snobleton in the dog-cart, Dunbar refreshed himself with a good laugh.

"By Jove, Van, that critique was beautiful! I shouldn't be half so flattered if the *Quarterly*, the *Westminster*, or the *Times* were to tell me I beat every roman-cist hollow, from Le Sage to Bulwer. Didn't Beatrice come out. I give you my word, when she asked me so

seriously if I didn't think myself clever, I could have burst with laughter."

"You'll be more likely to get puffed up with vanity," murmured Pop, who was rather cross, for the Breloques had not been at the meeting, as we know it would kill "the county" to mix for a second with "the town."

"No, most wise Ginger," answered Dunbar, seriously, whipping up the mare, "I shall never be fat, thank Heaven. I'm too muscular; and if I ever require my waistcoats extended one tenth of an inch, I shall turn vegetarian, and drink vinegar, as Adela Breloques has done for the last ten years (if one may judge from the sharpness of her nose), with many other stout quasi juveniles."

Poor Pop shrank into himself. He learnt what it was to try satire with the author of Charlie Cheroots.

"'Pon my life, it's odd how well Beatrice read my character in describing Latakia's," said Dunbar, as we sat smoking that night. "I don't mean in the flattery about my talents, &c., but in the 'underlying sadness,' as the young lady styled it, and in the enjoyment I take in pitching into that double-distilled donkey, Society. She's right enough, Van, that I've had my share of sorrow, though nobody would think it; and she has read my nature truer in my writings than anybody ever did yet."

I smiled. "You've forgiven her the Latin, then?"

"Latin? Oh yes; she's nothing of the *bas bleu* about her, so it don't matter. I suppose she picked up a smattering of Horace from Charlie's tutor; she's a clever little thing—very intelligent, and has something to say for herself. What a treat that is now-a-days, when the girls one meets are all well-dressed puppets—nothing better, and can only lisp their inane nonsense about

Lady A.'s last ball, or Lady B.'s new bonnet; or how pleasant a *valseur* young D. is, or what a lovely pug Captain E. has given 'em. There are plenty of pretty heads on pretty shoulders, but precious few with anything inside them. They have unexceptionable coiffeurs, and hair 'done' to a nicety; but they're like whipped cream, all outside show, and in the little geese's heads you look in vain for stuffing."

"How eloquent we are! Put that down for Part XII. of Charlie Cheroots, and add that it was inspired by Dunbar's Beatrice, second only to Dante's."

"Who is a charming exception to the general run of young ladies, for which Latakia will amuse himself with her company as often as possible. By George! that reminds me I've got to finish all my October things for the *Pot-Pourri*, the *Liberalist*, and the *Equality Review*. I'll sit up and write to-night. You're off to bed Van, Push me those Cubas before you go. Thank you. Pleasant dreams, old fellow."

III.

THE REVIEW, AND THE PRESENTATION OF THE COLORS BY BEATRICE.

Time slipped away, and the Donkeyshire's best drilled company seemed to me only an awkward squad. We seemed to try with all our might to realise *Punch's* '48 militia's pictures, and if we didn't parade when it was wet with our umbrellas up, it was merely because half the Donkeyshire didn't possess such articles. The most

martial man among us was our Podilirious M'Dougall, who had grown the fiercest moustache in the regiment, and, as I have said, never parted with his sword, but went clanking about with it at all hours of the day up the High Street and down the market-place, the ting-ting it played on the pavé making, I suppose, sweet music to his medical ears.

The most notable event that occurred was the arrest of Spoon, an ensign, son of a Snobleton brewer. When stealing at dusk into the garden of Miss Backboard's Academy, to visit the lovely object of his passion, he was ignominiously taken up by a policeman for trespassing, and had to pay the cost of the virtuous Backboard's prosecution. The Covey continued very great guns, Fanny making desperate love to Charlie and Sophy to Dunbar, old Toffy shutting both eyes tight, like a sensible parent as he was.

The Breloques gave carpet-dances twice a week, and waltzed the ensigns into rapturous adoration, and poor Pop nearly into a proposal. Pop would have compromised himself entirely if a Snobleton solicitor hadn't shown him some notes (facsimile of the dainty billets-doux the ensign daily received) which Adela had written him only six months before, which unlucky discovery a little damped the militiaman's ardor, and made him sing, "Hopeless, I've watched thee," and "I know a maiden fair to see," so drearily and dreadfully, that Eagle, who lived next him, was driven to change his lodgings. Dunbar, meanwhile, was constantly riding over to Springley, taking books, floss silk, beads, potichomanie and diaphanie, new crayons, gold for illuminating, or any other little commissions Beatrice chose to give him. There was no duenna at Springley. Lady de Vaux was dead, and Sir Cadwallader's sister, a mild old lady, devoted to lapdogs

and knitting, was as good as nobody. There were plenty of guests, to be sure, but none of them thought it their business to spy on their young hostess. Sir Cadwallader was shut up in his library, or out at the sessions, or attending some other magisterial duties; so Dunbar sang, and read, and chatted with Beatrice as much as he liked, which was whenever he wasn't drilling or shooting over the Springley preserves. And they had at once so much that was akin and so much that was different (*l'harmonie dans les sentimens et l'opposition dans les caractères*, as Dunbar quoted,) that Latakia fell in love for the two hundred and sixtieth, and Beatrice for the first, time in their lives.

All the two months through we'd been fancying the Duke of Cambridge, or the illustrious Field-Marshal author of our hat, would come down to review us, but as they didn't, we thought we'd review ourselves, and I don't doubt we pleased ourselves a great deal better than we should have done them. At this review Sir Cadwallader thought he'd bestow a pair of colors on the Donkeyshire, and the little white hands of his daughter were to give them away.

"Il promet plus de beurre que de pain," whispered Beatrice, pointing to our redoubtable motto, "*Noli me tangere*."

"No, it doesn't," said Dunbar, laughing. "It's quite true the gallant corps never will be touched—by powder. A donkey's ears, with the motto '*Awkward Squad*,' would be more appropriate than that rising sun and royal arms."

"Why do you waste your time then, and lower yourself by belonging to them?" asked Beatrice. "I should have thought both your spirit and inclination would have led you long ago before Sebastopol."

“ They would, but for an affair with Trelawney, which shut the service upon me. Else I should have been at Alma and Balaklava with poor Jack. But, however, plenty of better fellows than I have been shot down in that thankless cause, and I hope you don’t wish I were among the number.” And Dunbar made his handsome eyes very sorrowful and touching. The upward look he got answered him fully.

All Snobleton came to see us reviewed. There were three carriages from Springley, and Beatrice in her own little trap, with four black Shetlands that put me in mind of Cinderella’s mice ; the Popleton vehicle, with a gorgeous hammercloth and coat-of-arms as big as life (the banker’s grandfather had kept the Marquis’s Arms, but they dropped that reminiscence, you see,) and Georgie Pop inside it cosmetiqued, fixatriced, and got up to a T ; the Breloques, in a hired clarence, with entire conservatories emptied out on their bonnets, and a thousand prepared minauderies and ready-made smiles to trap the unwary. The Covey, too, came with their bosom friend Miss Boddington, a job-master’s daughter, in a landau from the paternal Boddington’s stables, and boldly took their stand in the inner circle, to the immeasurable disgust of the Snobleton “ aristocracy.”

Then there were a great many on foot who couldn’t see themselves and wouldn’t let anybody else, who were constantly breaking the line and getting mixed up among the bayonets ; and there was Sir Cadwallader riding about very grand and stern on a kicking black horse, and Mount Etna swearing till he was black in the face, and the rest of the gallant Donkeyshire doing all that they ought not to do, and leaving undone all that they ought to do. Our bugler burst forth in the “ British Grenadiers,” the fife in “ The girls we leave behind us,”

the clarionet in "Cheer, boys, cheer," and the drum in an incessant tattoo in harmony with nothing ; and amidst this fanfaronade the manœuvres commenced.

I cannot describe them, they were far too beautifully complex ; Williams of Kars himself would have been bewildered by those intricate and marvellous evolutions. It was specially grand when we got mixed up with the crowd, and Stokes, a private in my company, impaled a small boy on his bayonet to the destruction of a pinafore and a leather belt ; and when we formed into square, and my servant, firing with his eyes shut, as was his custom, *à la Winkle*, discharged his blank cartridge straight into Sir Cadwallader's face, thereby ruffling the baronet's aristocratic equanimity to a very, unaristocratic extent. The evolutions over, two drums were set in the middle of the cricket-field, with the colors laid upon them ; the Donkeyshire formed round, and Beatrice, with her pretty mixture of girl's gaiety and woman's self-possession, descended from her pony-carriage. She gave Dunbar, who was looking at her with admiring approval, a side glance and a smile as she walked to the drums with that thorough air of "lady" that the Georgie Pops and Adela Breloques never can carry, let 'em dress as they will. She made the regiment a pretty speech in her soft, clear voice, as she gave the colors to the two youngest ensigns. There was, of course, an immense deal of huzzaing, old Mount made a flowery oration to Beatrice, and we marched round the field, Charlie carrying the Queen's and Spoon the regimental colors, and the band playing "God save the Queen," the bugle at a gallop, the fife at a slow trot, the clarionet at the peace of the Dead March, and the drum performing the variations peculiar to itself. We gave them a luncheon afterwards in a tent used for the Snobleton flower-shows ; and Dun-

bar sat himself next Beatrice, his handsome eyes discoursing most eloquently.

“Who are those two persons Charlie is so *dévoué* to?” asked Beatrice, when the luncheon was nearly over, glancing at the bottom of the tent, where her brother, in reckless forgetfulness of Sir Cadwallader, had outraged every virtuous feeling of the Snobleton *élite* by placing the Covey.

“Their name is Toffy. Will you take some *dindon désossé*? ”

“Thank you. Do they live in Snobleton? Who are they?”

“Two handsome women,” laughed Dunbar, not willing, for Charlie’s sake, to enlighten her concerning the belles of “*notre magasin*.”

“But not ladies,” said Beatrice, looking at them with a little disgust, and thinking Dunbar’s silence rather odd. “A laugh will tell a lady, you know, as Latakia says.” And her own laugh rang clear and musical.

“You flatter Latakia very much by remembering his idle words.”

“‘Idle’ words! There you are, depreciating your unhappy friend again. I am afraid you are of a very envious disposition, *monsieur*. By the way, I am angry with dear Latakia for his September number. He speaks so naughtily about women, as if we were only fit to be his lordship’s toys, and it were supreme condescension to elevate us even so high. He seems to conceive that if we are pretty we must of necessity be silly, and that our highest office in this world must be to warm his highness’s slippers and fill his mightiness’s *meerschäum*!”

Dunbar liked nothing better than to set Beatrice off on her sex’s rights. She looked so pretty in her animated

tilting, when she put her red lance in rest and charged him full gallop.

"Well, those are duties any amiable wife would perform, are they not?" he said, with what Beatrice called his provoking smile.

"Duties? Odious words! If those are Latakia's ideas, he had better marry his housemaid, she'll be more used to waiting on him, and do it better. It is a pity gentlemen with such notions of wives' duties don't turn Mahometans, and keep a thousand slaves."

"It would be pleasant, but I'm afraid it might be expensive," answered Dunbar, thoughtfully. "One would want such a large house, that's the worst of it."

Beatrice pulled her gloves on impatiently, and arched her pretty eye-brows contemptuously.

"And as I say, after all," continued her tormentor, "if one marries a good, sensible girl, not too accomplished, and not pretty enough to be vain, who feels her inferiority to us, and doesn't seek for admiration, but has a needle at hand if a button comes off, and can keep a check on the cook's expenses, and knows when a dinner is well served, why, that all is one wants in a wife."

"And I hope that is all you will ever get!" cried pretty, accomplished, brilliant Beatrice, as innocent of needlework and housewifery as Dunbar himself. "Marry my maid, she will suit you exactly. She has all the serviceable qualities you require, and you will not be troubled with too much wit, beauty, or intellect. If I were you, I would advertise in the *Times*—'A wife, wanted—neither head nor heart desirable, but a strong pair of hands indispensable. N. B. Housemaids and pastrycooks are particularly eligible for the situation.'"

And Miss Beatrice spoke very angrily and disdainfully, with her soft eyes flashing, but her cheeks were pale, and

tears glistened on her lashes. Dunbar laughed heartily, he was so happy. He thought to himself, "Unless she cared for me, what I say wouldn't trouble her quite so much."

"Hallo, Pussy, quarrelling with Dunbar," said Charlie, leaning over her, having summarily deserted the Covey on catching his governor's eye fixed inquiringly on Fanny and Sophy.

"Quarrelling? Dear me, no, Charlie. What could make you think so? Captain Dunbar and I were only comparing notes, to see how utterly different all our opinions are," answered Beatrice, carelessly buttoning her right-hand glove.

"That's quarrelling, Pussy. Fie! it's very naughty to be cross to Dunbar, when only such a little time ago you told me you loved him," whispered Charlie.

Beatrice stared at him, turned scarlet, then white, caught Dunbar's eyes and dropped her own, in the most miserable fix a young lady ever was placed in. Then her self-possession came to her aid, and she tried to look haughty with all her might, though her hand shook, and she breathed quickly.

"Carlton! what an absurd jest. I should think you scarcely know what you are saying."

"Oh yes, I do, Pussy," answered Charlie, coolly. "I assure you, 'pon my honor, though you may pretend to deny it before him, that you did really and truly say you loved my friend Lennox Dunbar."

Beatrice tried hard to conceal her agitation, and succeeded.

"You disgrace yourself, Carlton, not me. Captain Dunbar, have the goodness to take me to papa."

"Wait a bit, Pussy; just let a fellow speak," said Charlie, in a low tone. "Don't get so deucedly stiltified.

I repeat that, whether you unsay it just because Dunbar's here or not, that you distinctly told me, after reading the July number of the *Pot-Pourri*, and some things in the *Equality Review*, that you loved—yes, loved—Latakia!"

"Latakia!" repeated Beatrice, the light dawning on her. "Are *you* Latakia?" she cried, turning to Dunbar, the color mounting in her cheeks.

"Yes; and happy indeed am I to be Latakia, if anything I ever had the good fortune to write has amused one hour of yours, or won me one word of your approval," whispered Dunbar, bending down to her.

Beatrice put her hand into his offered arm, and looked up with naïve joy in his face, quite forgiving him his heathenish matrimonial doctrines.

"To think that you should be Latakia! How glad I am! If I hadn't been so stupid I should have guessed it long ago. Oh, now you will promise me, won't you, to make Charlie Cheroots marry dear little Lucille?"

"That I will, to please you, though I've had some idea of killing her, to punish Cheroots for his naughtiness; and, Beatrice, will *you* promise *me* not to deny to Lennox Dunbar the love you in jest gave to Latakia?"

He spoke in a whisper as he leant over the pony-carriage, for her old aunt, plague take her! sat on the other side. He felt a tiny pressure of his hand as she dropped the reins and stooped to pick them up; and then the four mice bowled away his fairy queen, and he was obliged to content himself as best he might."

"Clever fellow Dunbar is," said Connyngname of the Tenth, that evening, in the Springley drawing-room. "It's a crying shame to bury himself with such a set of asses. That famous duel of his lost the service a splendid soldier."

Yes, he is clever, and very agreeable," answered sententious Sir Cadwallader. "I was sorry to hear such reports of him, as Mr. Altarcloth told me to-day."

Altarcloth was the perpetual curate of St. Purification's, whom Dunbar caricatures in his church-service.

"What about?" asked Connyngname, listlessly.

"About him and the daughters of Toffy, the confectioner, with whom he lodges," answered the baronet, lowering his tone, lest his daughter should be contaminated. "They are fine women—very fine women, certainly—but Altarcloth tells me Dunbar's conduct with them is—anything but what it should be." And Sir Cadwallader, who, being a county member, thought it expedient to be very puritanic, rigid, and oblivious of his own youth, lifted his eyebrow and shook his head.

Connyngname laughed. "The Covey! Oh, I dare say; crinoline was always his favorite game."

Beatrice turned round, her dark eyes flashing, and her cheek flushed. "Dear papa, do you listen to what Mr. Altarcloth tells you? There is not a greater scandal-monger in all Donkeyshire. Surely you do not allow that hypocritical pet preacher to influence you against an intimate friend?"

Sir Cadwallader frowned, and changed the subject.

Scorning herself for being jealous of the Covey, but hating them with all the hot, reasonless, fiery hate with which a girl in love hates any woman to whom her "*alter idem*" only says "Good morning!" Beatrice listened to this gossip, to which, in the earlier stage of his residence at "*notre magasin*," my friend, to say the truth, had given a corner-stone, which is always enough to build a large temple for gossip in a country town.

Beatrice recalled his unwillingness to speak of the Covey, the haste with which he dismissed the subject,

but thought, "Yet, if he likes me, he can't care for such girls as those *now*, whatever he may have done before." With which womanlike reasoning Beatrice went to the carriage to drive to the Snobleton Theatre, her heart as unquiet and fearful as partridges in October, wondering when Dunbar would repeat the question he put to her that morning.

IV.

HOW DUNBAR WENT TO THE MISS TOFFYS' BOX AT THE SNOBLETON THEATRE, AND THEREBY PUT HIS FOOT IN IT.

WE got up to go to the theatre, which was opened that night for the first time by a manager whose spirit of enterprise beat Columbus's hollow, since Snobleton set its face, on principle, dead against anything amusing, and parson-bestridden till it had no tin for anything but parochial testimonials and red handkerchiefs for heathens Dunbar slipped his arm into Charlie's as we went down the inn steps. "So, you've actually been green enough to give Miss Fan a promise of marriage?"

"A written one," murmured poor Charlie.

"Oh, of course. Never knew a young one do a thing by halves. So, do you actually mean us to see in the *Times* the nuptials of 'Carlton de Vaux, only son of Sir Cadwallader de Vaux, of Springley, Donkeyshire, to Fanny, eldest daughter of Nathaniel Toffy, confectioner, Snobleton?' You'll get the wedding-cake for nothing, that's a consideration, certainly. I suppose you'll ask your sister to be bridesmaid?"

"Confound you, Dunbar! you know I never meant

anything of *that* sort," burst in the unlucky ensign. "I gave it one evening when, I believe, I'd taken more of old Toffy's rum-and-water than was good for me; and—and—you know a fellow's driven into such things sometimes."

"I believe you, my innocent; and Fanny's a first-rate whip. I'd something of the same kind myself when I was a boy at Trinity. She was the arrantest flirt that ever fixatriced her bandeaux—a wicked little Melusine!—but the rascally jury gave her damages for three hundred, like donkeys as they were," said Dunbar, pausing to re-light his cigar.

"So you wish, now, that luckless promise had never been given?"

"Yes, by George I do!" swore poor Charlie.

"Thought as much. Well, I shall have to help you I suppose. See if I can't talk the confectioner into reason, and persuade the Covey that they'll never get Springley and the title, and that they may as well take a quiet *douceur* at once, like sensible women. You've taken them tickets to-night, I suppose? Which box?"

"No. Four," answered the Covey's victim. "'Pon my soul, Dunbar, if you can get that unlucky bit of paper out of old Toffy's clutches, I shall never know how to thank you—upon my word I shan't."

"Wait till I've done it, my dear boy; and as for thanks, they only bore me. If I serve any man I like, I serve myself. Here's the lobby. You go to some other box, keep close to Van or the colonel, and show the Covey the rebellion's begun." With which advice Dunbar threw down his four shillings, took off his undress-cap, and proceeded to the Covey's box.

There were the Miss Toffys unchaperoned, shining in great brilliance, in scarlet opera-cloaks and paste jewels.

They received the handsome captain with great cordiality. Sophy was always very sentimental with him, sighed as she spoke to him, and put flowers and such-like delicate attentions in his rooms—things which Dunbar, whose head was just then full of higher game, was scarcely so touched by as Sophy anticipated. Dunbar's object being conciliation, he made himself very agreeable to the Covey during the first act of "The Stranger," which lively and inspiring play the manager had selected for his first representation. Regardless of the averted eyes and shocked feelings of the few Snobletonians of the dress circle, Dunbar, intent on Charlie's business, was talking and laughing, leaning against the side of the box, his sash touching Sophy's black ringlets, when, putting his glass in his eye to look round the house, he saw Beatrice De Vaux sitting in the centre box, her soft, long eyes, now haughty and flashing, fixed on him.

"If that isn't the very devil!" thought Dunbar. "The deuce! she may have been here these twenty minutes, and if she thinks herself neglected for the Covey, I shall have been and gone and done it with a vengeance!" With which consolatory reflection he summarily left the Toffys and went into the De Vaux's box. With the remembrance of his parting words to her, and her answer (by eyes,) anything but repulsive, Dunbar naturally bent down towards Beatrice with still more *empressement* than ever, and looked a continuation of his valedictory address. But Beatrice sat pale and reserved, with her eyes fixed unswervingly on the stage, replied to his questions with cool monosyllables, and behaved so wholly unlike her usual soft, winning, lively self, that Dunbar's pride, quite as unmanageable and hard-moulded an animal as hers, began to take fright and to kick at its traces. Perhaps his love was unwelcome; besides, possibly her si-

lence had meant *dissent* in the morning, and at the idea my lord rose in his stirrups and turned restive. Proud, high-mettled Dunbar would have shot himself rather than urge an unacceptable suit. The memory, too of a thousand encouragements she had given him spurred him up to hiding from this little coquette all she cost him; so he crushed down all he suffered, and, turning away from Beatrice, began talking and laughing with Connyngghame. And the two who had talked love in the morning, parted with a chill "good evening!" that night.

V.

A BALL—AN ACCIDENT—AND A WEDDING.

THE next night we gave a ball in conjunction with the yeomanry—noble creatures, who squeezed themselves into tight green jackets, and mounted fat cart-horses, one week, annually, when their manœuvres were a sight second in grandeur only to our own.

The yeomen, being volunteers, weren't excluded from their officers' ball. Dunbar tried hard to keep 'em out, but it wouldn't do. It was the custom for Strap the leatherseller's and Last the bootmaker's wives to dance in the same room with the De Vaux, the Fitzcockywhoops and the Pursangs of Donkeyshire; and dance they would, for all Dunbar or anybody else.

Dunbar chanced to be talking to the unlucky Covey as Beatrice entered. She was close to me, and I thought I saw tears in her eyes, but I wasn't sure; at any rate, she turned her head, so that Dunbar couldn't see her, and went up the room as dignified as Sir Cadwallader himself, though she flushed scarlet when Dunbar, after waltzing with Adeliza Fitzcockywhoop, whirled round one of the rose tarlatans in a gallop.

"The devil, Dunbar," said I that night, when we got home to "notre magasin," "the other day you and Beatrice were playing at Strephon and Chloris; now you won't speak to each other. What does it all mean?"

"It means that I've been a fool," said he, his teeth clenched hard on his pipe as he sat looking steadily into the fire. "I've let a woman get a hold on me, so that she can make me happy or miserable like a raw boy of sixteen. My God! how mad I have been to care so much for her!"

His face turned as white as death, and the veins on his hand swelled like cords as he grasped the arm of the chair. I stared at him.

"By Jove, Dunbar, I'd no idea it was anything so serious!"

He laughed—very dreary mirth it was—as he rose, saying:

"A man always makes a fool of himself some time in his life, you know, Van. My turn's come at last. I've made playthings of women all these years; it's poetical justice that one of 'em should give me a turn at last. But . . . God help me! I never thought any one would have power to torture me as she does!"

With which Dunbar, who was rarely communicative about his private feelings, bade me an abrupt "Good night," and shut his bedroom door with a clang. The next morning, when we came off parade, Dunbar found Sophy Toffy putting some china-asters in a vase on his mantelpiece. She could see him perfectly come in by the mirror; but she let him get up to her before she gave a start and a little scream, and began to apologise for being there. Dunbar, feeling tired, grave, and miserable, consigned her mentally to his Satanic Majesty; but, having Charlie's cause in view, made her pretty speeches, and drew her into talking over the luckless ensign's

promise of marriage. Sophy cried and sentimentalised over her sister's deceived affections, which pathos Dunbar pooh-poohed very soon, and induced her to look at the subject from a business point of view, proving the utter hopelessness of Charlie's ever fulfilling the contract, and offering them more in his own name to keep the affair quiet than they would ever get from an action. Sophy was at last gained over to treating the matter, as she sold méringues and muffins, by £ s. d.; and Dunbar, knowing the eloquence most clear to the Covey's intellect, rewarded his new ally with flowery compliments, and a touch of his moustache on her brunette cheek.

That afternoon he galloped over to Springley; Sir Cadwallader received him rather stiffly, told him he had sent Beatrice for a month to Hastings with her aunt, and Dunbar, repressing, out of regard for Charlie, a strong desire to tell the priggish old baronet that but for him he'd have had a confectioner's daughter for his belle-fille, trotted back to mess more down in the mouth than he, gay, brilliant Latakia, would have been supposed capable of being under the gloomiest circumstances.

Charlie was sitting in his lodgings buried in an arm-chair, his feet on the mantelpiece, smoking, and reading a French novel. Down on the fiftieth page of "*Amaranthe, ou les Mystères de Versailles*," fell a sheet of note-paper; Charlie caught it up with a shout as he saw his unhappy promise to make the charming Fanny Mrs. De Vaux, and felt Dunbar's hand laid on his shoulder!

"No thanks, young fellow! Let the warning keep you out of similar scrapes, that's all, when I mayn't be by to act guardian angel."

"On my word, Dunbar, I don't know how to thank you enough," cried Charlie. "You're a deuced good fellow—on my honor, you are! But the Covey didn't

let you have this for nothing, or if they did, old Toffy wouldn't."

"Of course not, my juvenile. But never mind that; you couldn't pay the damage without recourse to the governor or the Jews; it will be time enough to settle with me when you come into the title."

Beatrice came home one Tuesday morning in December, and that same morning, quite by chance, Dunbar and Charlie drove over to Springley for some pheasant shooting. The keepers and beaters were waiting for them at the lodge, so that they hadn't to waste time by going up to the house, but went at once to the covers.

The sport was very good. Dunbar was a splendid shot, and when they threw themselves down under a hedge to refresh themselves with cold capon and Guinness's, both were tolerably satisfied with their morning's work.

"Why look there, that's Pussy strolling along by herself," cried Charlie as they finished their luncheon. And he looked over the hedge. "She didn't use to be so partial to solitary promenades in the park."

Dunbar's heart beat as fast as an express train as he saw a form in a grey hat, and black jacket, and scarlet petticoat, showing tiny kid boots to perfection, walking unconsciously towards them, with five or six dogs about her.

"Go through the gap, and speak to her. Where on earth is your politeness gone?" laughed Charlie.

Dunbar, longing to go, yet not sure that it would be welcome, pushed his way through a break in the hedge, and went towards her. Charlie followed him quickly; the trigger of his gun caught on a twig, went off, and Dunbar, putting his hand to his side, gave a low cry, and fell forward on the turf.

"Good Heavens! I have killed him," shrieked the boy.

"I have murdered my friend, my dearest friend," as he threw himself beside Dunbar, distracted with grief and terror. But with a cry ten times more full of anguish even than his was, Beatrice ran up and dropped on her knees, her face blanched, and her eyes wild, as she spoke almost inarticulately: "He will die—he will die! Go for help—go at once. Do you not hear? Not that way," she cried, mad for the moment with agony, "the lodge is nearer. Send the men up to the house. Go, go! or he will die!"

Charlie, scarcely conscious of what he did, staggered off to the lodge, while keepers and beaters flew all ways, some to the house, some for the nearest surgeon.

Beatrice knelt beside him, supporting his head against her, holding her cobweb handkerchief to stanch the blood flowing fast from his side, while the dew stood on her brow, and her heart stopped its throbs. Unused as she was to such scenes, his ashy lips, his closed eyes, the deadly pallor of his face seemed death itself; and Beatrice, as she bent over him, learning how much she loved him, believing that his life was stilled for ever, kissed his cold brow as though to call him back to existence, and prayed for her own life to be taken if only his might be spared. She forgot all about the Covey then. As consciousness came back to him, he felt her hot tears on his cheek, and, slowly unclosing his eyes, saw her face bending over him. "Do you love me, Beatrice?" said Dunbar, faintly.

"Yes, yes," murmured Beatrice, thick sobs choking her voice, and the blood rushing into her cheeks. "You will live yet, oh, thank Heaven!"

"You love me," repeated Dunbar, ecstasy beaming in his face; then his eyes closed, and his head fell back on her knee in utter unconsciousness again.

It was not long before poor Charlie, half beside him-

self, calling himself a murderer, wishing himself dead and Heaven knows what other awful retribution, came back, with half the servants and Sir Cadwallader himself, who was secretly scandalized at seeing Beatrice with a man's head on her knee and her hand held to his side, but couldn't, under the circumstances, lecture her thereon. They put him on a stretcher and took him up to the house, where the surgeons pronounced no danger at all, and extracted the shots very easily. He was on the sick list some time though, poor old fellow, but found it very pleasant to be petted, and waited on, and fed with every delicacy she could think of, and made much of by such a nurse as Beatrice, till he couldn't in conscience call himself even convalescent any longer. During that long convalescent time, when she read, and sang, and played to him, and wouldn't let him lift his hand for fear of over-exertion, they came, you're sure, to mutual explanations ; and Dunbar said he never was so obliged to any man as he was to Charlie for shooting him. Beatrice showed him how naturally the attention she saw him pay the Covey verified the reports she had heard ; but assured him words could never tell all she had suffered. how much she had loved him, and so on *ad infinitum*, Charlie, in the agonies of remorse, had confided to his governor the affair of the Covey, and Sir Cadwallader, when Dunbar informed him in a decided manner that he wished to marry his daughter, couldn't very well have refused ; indeed, I don't know that he desired to do so, for Lennox was as good blood as the De Vaux, and had "very fair expectations."

The 20th of February was Dunbar's wedding-day, and we came out in full force in the Springley church. There were a dozen bridesmaids, harassing visions of whom, in white tulle and holly wreaths, tortured Spoon and shook Pop's fidelity for months afterwards. There

were all the Fitzcockywhoops and Pursangs, a sprinkling from the Peerage and Baronetage, and a good dash of the Army and Navy. I'm afraid there was more fun and nonsense at the breakfast than Sir Cadwallader quite liked or thought good ton, but it was a jolly affair altogether, though Dunbar worked himself nearly into a fever with impatience at it, and was in a state bordering on distraction till he got Beatrice safe in the carriage and sprang in himself, with a hasty "Good-by, old fellows!"

It was our last mess in the Marquis's Arms. On the morrow, farewell to Georgie and to Adela, to the Covey and cozy luncheons in "notre magasin," to easy parades and mock rounds and feather-bed soldiering in sleepy Snobleton. We sat late and drank deep, toasting our lost loves and bewailing our destinies, cursing the War-office that wrote out our Kismet, and laughing loud over Popleton's poetic fire, which, wrought upon by circumstances, and inspired by whisky, found vent in the following effusion, delivered with some hesitation and a few sighs, and a vast deal of drinking on the poet's part :

SNOBLETON'S LAMENT.

A LAY OF FEBRUARY, 1855.

'Tis over, 'tis over, the pang is past,
 The militia is gone—is gone at last !
 They are "gone from our gaze like a beautiful dream,"
 And are whistled away by an engine and steam.
 And oh ! for the pen of a Muse to declare
 The heartrending woe of the brave and the fair ;
 No lay of Childe Harold, no poem of Poe,
 Was ever so sad as the tale of our woe.
 Ah ! little, too little, the Horse Guards can guess
 Of the pain they have caused by ordaining the mess,
 To remove to that horrid, detestable camp,
 When the snow's on the ground and the weather so damp !

The last day has come, and the last day has past,
 The bills and the billets-doux both rained in fast,
 But despite ev'ry obstacle off they are sent,
 And poor Snobleton's doomed to a very triste Lent.
 "Notre magasin " 's shut, and deserted its halls,
 The Cövey will figure no more at the balls ;
 Latakia and Spicer have both taken wing,
 And all that is left of dear Charlie's a ring ;
 Fair Adela's spirits to zero have sunk,
 And poor Georgie Pop's in a very great funk.
 The Backboard's fair students may slumber in peace,
 Not again will our Spoon risk the wrath of police !
 The cricket-field's silent, no more the drum's beat
 Is heard as our fellows defile down the street.
 "The milishee's a coming !" was whilom the cry
 'That saluted our ears as the colonel rode by ;
 But the town's silent now, from the north to the south,
 And cigar-shops look very much down in the mouth.
 Ladies and ladies' maids neither can sleep,
 And even a bridegroom o'er whisky did weep,
 As he thought of the Monday nights' whist and the loo,
 And bade his East Donkeyshire comrades adieu.
 And "Pussy," too, Springley's particular star—
 Latakia has stolen and whirled off afar ;
 But long shall we think of her sweet dancing eyes,
 And bid her "God speed !" wheresoever she flies.
 So, farewell to ye, mess-room Amphitryons all !
 Farewell, ye frequenters of race, hunt, and ball !
 Farewell, to ye, gentle reunions for loo !
 Farewell, to ye, officers, clever and moux !
 May you never know sorrow a tenth part so great
 As the fair ones of Snobleton suffered of late,
 When their Donkeyshire darlings were cruelly sent
 From boudoir and drawing-room to barrack and tent,
 To practise the goose-step and study the drill,
 While, in the flirting-rooms, silent and still,
 Their Calypsos, forsaken, bewail the dear corps,
 And in tears vote the Horse Guards a terrible bore,
 For snatching from carpet-dance, pic-nic, and ball,
 The Donkeyshire heroes, so dear to them all !

THE END.

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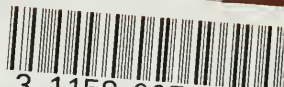
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